Merry Christmas
to
Mr. & Mrs. A. B. Ivy
from
Ralph and Cyril.
1911.

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A WAY OF HONOR

AND

OTHER COLLEGE SERMONS

By

HENRY KINGMAN, D.D.

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TO MY WIFE

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PREFACE

THE truths that inspire the world are likely to be old-fashioned truths. But we are impatient of old fashions. It is the problem of the preacher to commend the ancient messages of Jesus and the apostles to those who demand that their text-books in other lines should have been written within ten years in order to secure a hearing. It is the firm conviction of the writer that the essentials of the message that once stirred Galilee and Rome are intensely and incisively fresh and interesting to each new generation: and that there is nothing to which the critical college student of our day listens with deeper attention than these same words of Jesus, related to the issues of our time.

The following addresses were prepared for such an audience of college men and women, and were delivered in the Congregational Church of Claremont, California, where half the audience is made up of the students of Pomona College. They are printed only at the earnest solicitation of friends, to whom they seemed to have a wider message than their original use made possible. Their only claim

to a hearing must be in the simplicity with which certain long familiar truths may appear in them, for the comfort of men and women who have still to walk by faith and not by sight.

HENRY KINGMAN.

CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA,
August, 1911.

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I

A Way of Honor

"*Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things.*"—PHIL. 4:8.

PAUL was no pessimist. He knew that the world was full of things true and honorable and lovely; and that a man might, as a matter of habit and principle, fill his mind and heart with these things, and so keep his mind wholesome and pure, and his heart sweet and loving, even in this present evil world.

Neither was Paul blindly an optimist. He knew that the world was full of things false and dishonorable, yes, and disgusting; and that a man might —as many did and do—fill his mind with these things to the point of losing faith in man and God. He knew how the young Christian could cripple and disfigure, or perfect and beautify, his soul's life, according as he saw and dwelt on these things or their opposite. So, as a Christian gentleman, and a pure and knightly soul, he besought them to shut

their minds to one great side of life, and open them to another. And, as a very practical and sensible man, not a mere scholar or theologian, he told them what he meant by this, and how his bidding might be carried out.

He urged them, as in this verse, to form the habit and principle of noticing, seeking out, and dwelling upon, such things in life as are honorable and lovely in the sight of God and men alike; and elsewhere he urged them, no less earnestly, to shun both thought and speech on certain other facts of life, no less real, but which it was a shame for a man, living as a friend of Jesus Christ and in the eye of God, so much as to converse about. "I would have you," he says, "to be wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil."

This means a crippling of one's observation, does it not; a one-sidedness of knowledge and experience which a true man of the world would not consent to? Yes, it is unsymmetrical and one-sided, just as the famous art-galleries of the world are one-sided and untrue to life, so far as they depict, in marble and on canvas, only the beauties of the natural human form and not the deformities and monstrosities that are to be found in the medical museums. And just as these last are shocking and painful to any artistic eye, so Paul would have the young converts cultivate a spiritual sense to which

the cruel deformities and excrescences of life—its moral abnormities—should become honestly shocking and painful also, as they were to Jesus.

Paul believed in a distinct self-limitation, alike in knowledge and development. He did not believe that a man should be equally open-eyed and open-minded to all the facts of life. He was not the man to fear the charge of lack of courage or lack of breadth because he refused and abhorred the knowledge he could have got from any of the young blades of Corinth, or from keeping his eyes and ears attentively open to all that a heathen world might have to say to them. He was a specialist, with a specialist's frank courage to relinquish knowledge in lines utterly out of relation with his own. He was, as you and I would be, a specialist, as we may say, in virtue, seeking ever to lay hold of that for which he was laid hold of by his Master, Jesus Christ.

He could not, then, have a well-rounded acquaintance with all the ways and thoughts of avarice and cunning and malice and uncleanness, in which it is so easy to perfect one's self by a little persevering observation and inquiry. For the sake of having a mind like Christ, he would seek to have it as far as possible unsoiled by images that sear the brain and haunt the imagination life-long, starting up like spectres when most undesired, and that—like

Banquo's ghost—will not down at our command. Even at the risk of being called narrow or Puritanic or goody-goody—could you stand that?—Paul would have a man remember that he is a specialist, that Christ is his Teacher, and that Christ set the example of self-limitation at a prodigious cost: a cost infinitely greater than that asked from us, of deliberately trying to starve the mind in its undoubted craving for knowledge of things hurtful and dishonoring, cruel and unlovely and impure, even though newspapers and dramatists and literary realists of our day tell us that this craving is natural and legitimate, and must be met.

It is a very prosaic rule that Paul lays down,—somewhat wooden and arbitrary to the thought of many: the rule of deliberately and systematically looking for and feeding upon what is good and beautiful and true, and doggedly refusing to join in the search for what is as poisonous as it may be fascinating. It is a prosaic rule, but it leads in the end to a character exquisitely beautiful, natural, and strong. It must have been Christ's rule, as He listened to the talk of the village neighbors, gathered in the shade for the noon siesta, or for the evening gossip—the strongly flavored daily newspaper of His time. And it has been the rule and practice of all since then whose memory chiefly gives us faith in the possibilities of human kind.

I wish that every young man and woman might have in mind the famous dedication in the biography of Charles Kingsley, written by his wife. This is it:

"To the beloved memory of a righteous man, who loved God and truth above all things. A man of untarnished honor, loyal and chivalrous, gentle and strong, modest and humble, tender and true, pitiful to the weak, yearning after the erring; stern to all forms of wrong and oppression, yet most stern toward himself; who being angry, yet sinned not. Whose highest virtues were known only to his wife, his children, his servants, and the poor. Who lived in the presence of God here, and passing through the grave and gate of death, now liveth unto God forevermore."

The world does not possess such men, except as they are the product of such a rule of life as this of Paul's. They are the most characteristic product of a Christian civilization. A Christian gentleman; not only a Christian but a gentleman; not only a gentleman but a Christian; true, honorable, just, pure, lovely. And the Christian world is full of lives like this—if we but knew them—and of deeds and ways and thoughts like this, with which we may largely fill our minds, and so determine our growth and development. Christ in His words and ways is our chief inspiration, but not the only one;

and Paul bids the young Christians to look about them for every one and every thing that may help them to pure living and high thinking.

I

"Whatsoever things are true, think on these things." John says that truth came by Jesus Christ. The old heathen world sneered at truth. Until to-day the Orient scarce knows what it is to hold truth and sincerity dear as life. But Jesus Christ was truth incarnate, and doubtless every Christian who really masters His spirit is as true as steel. But such a man is a choice man and rare, and the world is sorely in need of more of his kind—not only of those who tell the truth, but of those who are true—not only the same on week-days as on Sundays, or who have the same spirit in business as in the prayer-meeting, but who would be the same on a pleasure tour alone in a European capital as among those who know them best at home; true, because consciously living in the searching eye of God, and in heart loyal to Him; not to the church, nor to society, nor to social conventions, from whose restraints one is sometimes freed, but true to a present Friend and Companion, Jesus Christ.

We need to think on everything that reminds us

what real truth demands; on what it has meant to other lives, and of how noble it is when it has been achieved. We, even in Christendom, live every day in sight of untruth in myriad forms. We are in grievous need of every aid we can get to remind us what it is to be unswervingly loyal to one's conviction; to refuse to say what we wish to be true, rather than what is true; to be unwilling, as it were unable, to bow the knee to good policy, or political necessity, or popular preferences, at the sacrifice of untarnished loyalty to our real allegiance; to prefer scrupulous honor to a little additional gain in a bargain; honestly to abhor disingenuousness and indirection; to remember that a lie is a stain on our honor, even if told to a corporation.

We need to be reminded that the way of the world is not the only way that men are treading; that there are other ideals in life than those of a diplomacy which gains its ends by cunning or evasion; of a trade which is not ashamed to use lying labels, or to overreach a competitor; of a press which, in a political campaign, both in England and America, largely misrepresents and systematically slanders its opponents; of a political life in which personal convictions are often sacrificed to expediency or to party pressure; of a society where sincerity is not considered a thing needful; or of a private life with two sides. In every one of these

fields of life—wherever the influence of Jesus is in control—there are other ideals and other practices. But we need to look for them, to remember them, to reflect upon their unspoken appeal to our own hearts; and to keep ourselves strong in the truth by keeping in the great fellowship of unswervingly truthful souls.

II

"Whatsoever things are honorable." The old version had "honest," but that is not quite the meaning, though certainly it covers that. It is rather the sense of "seemly," "deserving of respect," "honorable." Our Lord was a man of honor. You remember that curious passage in one of Dr. Livingstone's journals, written in a time of danger and despondency, when he was holding on by faith to one of our Lord's promises. He says, "I count that our Lord Jesus was a very perfect gentleman, and He will keep his word." And that is true, though the way of putting it may seem strange.

We sometimes speak of a public character as a man of "high honor." That would seem to indicate that there is a lower grade of honor prevailing even among good men; men who are not scrupulously honorable in the small details of life, who

are not above overreaching a little if the sufferer is well able to stand the loss,—as in the case of the government, or a railway company, or a wealthy corporation; and who, in other very trifling ways, would act as we cannot conceive our Lord would act were He upon earth, because He was a man of high honor.

Very often the answer is made to such an indictment as this, "Oh yes, but every one does the same, and every one expects it to be done." This shows what need there is to heed Paul's injunction to think on whatever things are honorable—for that answer is not true. Everywhere are those, though they may be very quiet or humble people, who are of a higher honor than to profit by another's loss, and who are honestly endeavoring to do as Jesus would do in like case. For those who really count themselves followers of Christ, the stately principle of *noblesse oblige* holds good, as it did not even for the old nobility of France. We are the nobility, of the family of God, with our king among us. If the current of popular indifference to high honor, in these and in many other small obligations of student and business life, threatens to sweep us away from a noble resolution, let us look up at our Lord and consider what He expects of us, and think again upon whatsoever things are honorable.

III

"Whatsoever things are pure." Thank God that there were never so many such things to look out upon before. One who would think upon these things is in a great company to-day. Yet he needs every atom's weight of their sympathy and fellowship to hold him uncompromising in the face of the many who call him a fool and a Philistine for his pains. There is an old-fashioned saying, once popular and much abused, but now grown sadly out of repute with the fashionable in art and letters and society, a voice stern, Puritanic, yet tremulous with feeling, "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

To be, in fact, sons and daughters to such a Father is worth some sacrifice, is it not, even of things good in themselves; worth some deprivations and separations and limitations, if need be, if these really serve that end? If there is no such Father, holy and tender, and no such actual possibility of a real filial relation to Him, then away with such precautions. But if there be, and one can have the infinite gain of drawing nearer to Him and His love,

and can the better see Him—as the pure in heart have been said to do—then it is well to rob ourselves of some of the indulgences that come at a high price in godliness. For if we will see what we choose, and hear what we choose, and read what we choose, and meditate on what allures us, without discrimination, then surely there is a price to pay, to be taken out of those most precious and sensitive faculties by which we see and apprehend and draw near to God.

There is no thought, in that utterance just quoted, of the old Pharisaical or monkish separation from the world's sin and need and sorrows,—no thought of pride, or conceit of sanctity, or prudish seclusion. It does not prevent one going, as the slum Sisters of the Salvation Army go, into the very sink of a city's slums, and living there in daily pain of eye and ear and heart, as indeed our Lord lived among us. It does not demand our separation from anything that it is our business to know and understand and measure carefully, that we may grapple with it as with an enemy, and seek to overthrow it. It will even carry some, a few, where only those sent of God and encompassed by Him can go without corruption of soul. But it will not let one soul of Christ's followers, so exquisitely sensitive to soil or stain, go a foot into idle, curious contemplation of the world's evil. Each one must

decide how far he has reason, in God's sight, to venture, in seeing, or hearing, or reading of those things which have the old mysterious fascination of the deep things of Satan. It depends somewhat on whether one's imagination is of tinder or of clay.

The literature of three millenniums, as it is gathered in any of our large libraries, is a wide field to ransack if one cares to know through what our world has come, and what it has shaken off. But one thing is as sure as a word of God, and of a like awful gravity—that for one beginning life, furnishing that mysterious mill, the human brain, with the grist of vivid thoughts and conceptions and images that during a whole life-time will be ground over and over and over again, entering into every one of its products, and worked with them into every morsel of the bread of thought that he must continue to eat, whether he will or no, as year follows year,—for him, at least, a curious fancy to know the worst will presently sting and poison and threaten, until it will be God's mercy to him if it only torments him so till death, and does not win him over to a complaisant acquiescence in its evil.

Self-limitation here is self-preservation. The words, " Whatsoever things are pure, think on these things," is a clear, sweet call from God, pointing

out the paths of peace. And to be wise toward that which is good, and simple toward that which is evil, is the way to a development of strong symmetry, beautiful to God's eye, and fitted to be of the best and rarest help to men.

It may not be easy to form such a resolution; but form it! Hold to it with a dogged obstinacy! And one day, years hence, when this carefully guarded present is in the past, and you are far away, alone, in some place where the devil's tides surge back and forth about your feet, so that a man is not expected to stand upright, you will stand upright, with Jesus Christ. This early resolution will have proved your strength and deliverance.

It is here that one is compelled to define his position regarding the modern drama, and to be old-fashioned for the most part in his attitude to the theatre. The day has passed when it is possible to secure assent to any general railing accusation against the theatre, as though stage plays, somehow, must needs be a source of evil, or as though the acting of them, in which we take so natural and keen a pleasure, were in some way objectionable and injurious. But the influence of the modern theatre, as it is for the most part in fact, any man who hungers for God in his soul, does well to distrust and fear.

There are many good plays and uplifting. But

if you will take the leading plays of the last five years, on both continents, which have held the boards in our chief cities, and to which has largely been devoted the best talent of the stage, with a few conspicuous exceptions they are degrading to any sensitive moral taste; and to the eye of our Lord, who knew His own mother's heart, and who loved the joys of the home that He could not have for Himself, and loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus and their quiet refuge at Bethany, they would be fearful and loathsome. If it be urged that they are true to the facts of life, it may be admitted,—as the medical museum is true to life. But if it be urged that they incite to virtue by showing the penalties of the opposite, this may be freely denied; for in that case the habitués of the theatre, who fill its front seats, would be of a far different type from what they are.

He is a brave man, and a Christian, who is afraid of such things, for himself and others; for there is a poison in them that in the end infallibly affects the sight; that deadens the nerve of the spiritual eye. As one has lately said, "The impure shall see all—save God." Save God! We cannot face the horror of such blindness. With Jesus and His mother, with Paul and John, and with all those who would rather see the face of God than any other thing on earth, let us think on "whatsoever things are pure."

IV

We cannot now consider further the lessons of this verse. Many will be found to tell you, in the club or on the street, that its ideas are narrow and out-of-date. Let us be wise enough to oppose to this ever-whispering voice of the Tempter the high call of Jesus, and this clean, noble appeal of Paul. Live in continual sight not only of Jesus Christ, but of the human lives that He has touched, so that they exalt humanity. Form the habit of reading those modern biographies that give us just and vivid pictures of these men, and that stir the soul like a trumpet call. Such biographies, I mean, as those of General Lee and General Armstrong, of Professor Le Conte and W. H. Baldwin; of Charles Kingsley, of Drummond, and Gladstone, and Phillips Brooks, and Miss Willard, and many another,—knightly souls, pure and of a high honor, that help us to understand what the religion of Christ can do for one to make life lovely and of good report. Think on these things. For though evil fills our ears, and surrounds us like a poisonous miasma, we are citizens of another country, whose gates we hope one day to enter. And through those gates in no wise passes anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie.

II

A Good Fight

"*Fight the good fight of the faith.*"—1 Tim. 6:12.

A WONDERFUL great fight it is! No two find it alike. Yet can you tell me how a true man can keep out of it!

Here is Robert Louis Stevenson speaking, writing to his father: "I am lonely and sick and out of heart. Well, I still hope; I still believe; I still see the good in the inch and cling to it." And years later he writes: "The battle goes on—ill or well is a trifle, so as it goes. I was made for a contest, and the Powers have so willed that my battle-field should be this dingy inglorious one of the bed and the physic bottle."

Who will doubt that his life was a battle-field, indeed, and that he more and more saw his place in the good fight?

Here is a fellow Scotsman, speaking from the heart of Africa, Livingstone; an old man, broken with sickness, racked with pain, lonely with the

great loneliness of one who had not heard from home for years, yet still holding grimly to his task and refusing to come home till it was finished. He writes from his dull hut in Manyuema: "I have an intense and sore longing to finish and retire, and trust that the Almighty may permit me to go home. Yet if I fall, I will do so doing my duty, like one of his stout-hearted servants." And just before he fell for the last time, still among those endless forests, he wrote: "Nothing earthly will make me give up my work in despair. Yet so many obstacles have arisen. Let not Satan prevail over me, O my good Lord Jesus." A braver fight was never fought by human soul.

In a far different field, consider what sort of life he led who was our country's leader through the dark days of the great war—Abraham Lincoln. A life of unremitting anxiety, of stern, strong patience under endless provocation, of struggle with almost unendurable odds, that drove him more and more to reverent dependence upon God, but that, even so, graved in his face as with a chisel those deep lines that told how sore the fight had been.

I think of a woman, Josephine Butler, who for years was the champion of those girls and women of England who were without a helper. She once wrote to Mrs. Booth pathetically, explaining why her face was not as joyful as she wished it. In

the sight of the terrible wrongs against which she fought, her earlier life, she said, was full of sorrow—indeed, of tragedy. "I have gone through seas of trouble and strange suffering. I am happier as I get older. The joy which God gives me overwhelms even the awful memories of the past. He so thoroughly broke my heart with despair, that I gave up and left the whole matter to Him." Do you realize how many of the world's helpers are still fighting in so bitter a contest even till today?

Or, to cross the seas again, I think of my old friend and colleague, Pastor Meng, of Paotingfu: who, when the cruel days came of the Boxer uprising, utterly refused to flee when he could and leave the three foreign teachers alone; and whom they tormented through one summer night, before they slew him, hoping to make him betray his associates or blaspheme his Leader; who stood undaunted, unfaltering, till the morning came and death with it, because he, too, like Paul, had one with him who comforted him and held him faithful.

Or right here at home are mothers, who have wrestled with God for their children, that they might be true men and true women, as God reckons true; who have spent some moments on their knees daily for more years now than they can remember,

praying that their boys might live to war a good warfare, and that their girls might be fair and honorable in His sight; never letting go, never losing heart, never relaxing in the hope and ministry of life. Oh, it has been a long fight, and often weary, and it is not over yet, and will not be until the mother's heart has quite let go of earth! No biography will ever mention it, no newspaper will ever speak words of public praise concerning it, but in the great campaign surely God has given them an honorable post.

And so we might go on through all this hour, calling up men and women from every walk in life, from the endless roll of witnesses to the fact that life at its best is a fight. At its noblest, it is a struggle. Not at its poorest and meanest. One may drift, or idle, or sing one's care-free way along any of the innumerable avenues that lead to failure and the ultimate disappointment. But if we are going anywhere that is worth the going, we have need to take a new grip on ourselves day by day, to hold ourselves steadily in the patience of effort and self-restraint.

But what is the use of saying these things, that are as familiar to us as any alphabet of life? Do we not all believe them and accept them as a matter of course? Does not our presence here this morning show that we are all of one mind in this

matter, and that each of us in his own way is trying to hold his own in the battle?

No! that does not follow. When we think of it we know that it is not so. We wish it were true. It is not true! To think so would be to resemble those who insisted on crying peace, peace, when swords were out and actually flashing in their streets. In our quiet company this morning is gathered every shade of human need and weakness in relation to this good fight, that demands strength and courage first of all. Some are consciously strong and overcoming. But some wonder if they still have a place in the ranks. Some have actually fallen out. Some simply hang about the skirts of the army of the Lord, non-combatants, looking on. Some, even among boys and girls full of good mettle, of the sort that may make and yet will make true soldiers, are actually ashamed to be counted as in the fight at all, and are rather proud of showing their independence by standing outside altogether. And only God knows how many who keep up a brave front are distressed at heart, as if they already saw themselves defeated.

So it is not a mere formal thing to ask ourselves carefully about this fight again—what it is, and how one plays his part in it, and what hope there is of persevering to the end. It is very familiar ground, but let us go over it again this morning,

and see if the divine light does not fall on it at a new angle, and illuminate life's problems anew for us this day.

And first let us take the words at their face value, for what Paul meant by them when he begged this young man to fight the good fight. The word used is not the one for battle, or for military service: its associations are not those of the camp or legion. It belongs to the athletic field, to the great games of the stadium, and to them alone. Our athletics, even our college athletics, are play, compared to those that Paul had been familiar with ever since his boyhood. Every Greek city had its stadium and its great contests, and the love of these national games was far more a passion with the Greeks, as has been said, than a mere amusement. The young men entered for them as a patriot enters his country's army. The training and diet and discipline were of the strictest. No man could enter for an event without taking oath that he had been ten months in training, and the athletic training-grounds of the city were as much a place of popular resort as the stadium itself. It was not a beggarly few they would get upon the bleachers in the days before one of the great games; the whole city population were eagerly alive and interested in the coming events. And so it is that Paul's writing is filled with allusions to various features of the games

—to their rules, to their training, and to their prizes. But here he speaks of the greatest event of all—the good contest—the strife above all others in its intensity and in its issues.

Contest, he says, in the great contest. Play the game, he says, in the greatest game of all. It was a life-and-death affair with him. Life was often involved in those Grecian and Roman contests of the amphitheatre. And it was to a lifelong struggle that he called Timothy; a struggle such that the best word for it, after all, was "the fight." So we have the appeal: "Fight the good fight." It was the appeal to the athlete—to the man who loves the intense, clean, manly struggle of the arena, for clean, high ends of honor, not for money or professional's reward; and to the man who would pay the price of the rigorous training and discipline required, without whining and without complaint. Altogether it is a noble, manly appeal to the best and strongest in us; an appeal of a sort that our own best athletics help us to understand.

But Paul did not lose himself in sentiment, or hide his meaning behind metaphors. The good fight of which he spoke was something vividly clear before him, and he did not leave his meaning in the vague, polite obscurity of one who does not dare speak out what is in his mind. He comes out clearly in the open, and speaks as a man speaks to men

when the utmost is at stake. He would have no man in doubt as to the terms of this contest.

He makes it shining clear that it means loyalty to the leadership of Jesus Christ. That loyalty will plunge a man headlong into a fight, from the first day—and such loyalty will keep him at the centre of the world's great fight until the end. If Jesus Christ had come into the world to preach a gospel like the Buddhist's, of the cessation of effort and the mortifying of desire till both die out together, then this great contest would have been another thing. But Jesus came to kindle desire and intensify effort, to raise them both to their highest power, and through them to save the world. He put himself at the heart of the struggle. He threw himself, like a forlorn hope, against the world's evil, and went down before it, in those days of which we read in the gospels.

But His own sacrifice was not the end of the fight, but the beginning. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and they shall be destroyed. But how many of the world's choicest lives shall be used in the contest, before it is at an end? Like Livingstone, and Mrs. Butler, and Pastor Meng, and the innumerable fellowship of those who give themselves to the struggle for the sake of others against the ever-changing forms of evil. If you or I are halfway in touch with Jesus Christ we shall

be involved in the greatest struggle the world has ever witnessed. A contest for athletes, indeed, in which each man must give account of himself.

For here is the other phase of the good fight. To be loyal to Jesus Christ is to be brought into an undying struggle with ourselves. For our own souls are beset with adversaries. As Paul was saying to Timothy, when he used these words, even a very innocent and natural desire—the desire to be rich—may lead a man into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition, and pierce them through with many sorrows. And if he honestly tries, obeying his Leader, to follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, has he not a contest on his hands? Does it come easily to play the game when it makes such demands on our daily living as meekness, and love, and patience? But is there any manlier contest worth engaging in in life, than a good fight against those things that drown the soul?

It is a help just here to remember that the "good fight" means always and everywhere not only a fight for certain things, but one under certain terms and conditions of leadership and fellowship and method. It does not mean the mere "fight for character," as we sometimes think, but a fight for character under these terms of leadership that as-

sure success. Millions of men, like the old iron-hearted Stoics, have made their fight for character under conditions that left their life bare and hard and cheerless as a desert without the sun. This good fight takes its color and attractive quality from its inseparable associations.

Surely we can understand this. Here is a man who has played college football for three years, and really loves the game—enjoys it for its excitement and intensity, for its own sake. A man comes to him after his graduation and says to him: "See here; will you join a football team I am getting up for next season's play?" "Well, I don't know; who are the other men in it?" "Oh, well; they are all star players; they are not exactly your kind, not all of them are college men, but they know the game all right." "But who is the captain?" "Oh! he is a man you don't know, McGuire of Chicago; he is a bit of a slugger, but he can just handle a team; if you like football you can't do better than join us." But the man doesn't join—wouldn't join for a big salary. Why? It is the same game. Yes! But the same game with another team, and another captain, and under a totally different atmosphere, becomes another game altogether, and your true athlete wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole.

And so with the fight for character! It may be

a very bleak and disheartening affair. But the good fight is the one under the inextinguishable hope and cheer of the good Leader, Jesus Christ, and the fellowship is that of the true and knightly souls that would be faithful to Him, and the rules and training of it are those of the loved family of God's own. We are not out for our own hand, fighting the battle at our own charges; to be disappointed, or discouraged, or fairly disheartened, just as the day's fortune changes. We are men in touch with the Captain of our Salvation; called by Him, inspired by Him, trusted by Him, loved by Him. How can we play Him false, however the tide of battle may be going!

You know the fiery enthusiasm of the men in the army of Garibaldi, the Italian patriot, how the very sight of his red-shirted figure was enough to make them forget fear. You remember how the Chinese, in that ever-victorious army of General Gordon's, would follow in the face of any enemy, if only he were leading, unarmed though he was. And for us in the good fight, all our hope of a fearless success is in this, that we are in personal association with Him who has called us to be His soldiers. There is where the sunlight and the hope break in, even on a half-beaten man, because He simply will not let us go down if we turn to Him. And the inspiration to go on is coming into our

lives, ever new and fresh, day by day, year by year, if we keep Him in sight.

But here we stop a moment to think of beaten men, who have made a slip or a fall, who have been beaten down for a day or a week, and who, heavy-hearted, have dropped out of the contest. If we are not men enough to fight the fight successfully, ought we not to give it up? If we are not gritty enough to play the game, ought we not to drop out? If a man tries to follow the Leader, and fails, must he not confess himself beaten and withdraw?

Oh, that we might hear the answer, trumpet-tongued, from heaven, the fervent answer, "No!" The very hero in this fight is the man who perseveres in the face of failure—who cannot be scared or shaken off by his own mishaps. Who comes back again. God knows, the hero is not the man who never slips or proves unfaithful, but he who rises again and again, penitent and humbled, but indomitable: who will run the course and play the game, though he comes late limping in, a sorry figure. He is the hero of the good fight. For it is a life struggle—not one of a week or month. In a hundred-yard dash, if a man slips, his chance is gone. But this event is like a long Marathon—not of hours but of days—where slips and falls may come more than once or twice, where a man may be clean winded and yet recover, where the only fatal blunder

is to drop out of the course altogether. But we do not love a quitter, and we are not of those who throw the whole matter up because we have made a poor showing on the first lap or the twentieth.

And all the more because we are sure of our Master's wish in this particular, even though we may have treated Him very shabbily. You remember how Peter asked Him once whether he, Peter, ought to forgive a man as many as seven times; and what Jesus answered, that up to seventy times he must forgive if he would be like God. The forgiveness for our blunders and our failures is inexhaustible, and God's mercy will not give out if we live on for seventy years, fighting the good fight as we do with many a setback, if only we stand up to the contest till the end. Let go we cannot; drink deep of God's mercy to a poor fighting-man, we can; all the more that out of poor fighting-men He has often made His heroes.

We do not think much upon the prize—upon the reward. Perhaps it is as well we should not. Those Greek warriors never received a penny for their long training, only the wreath of bay, or of the unfading pine that still grows about the Corinthian isthmus. What the incorruptible crown may be, of which Paul spoke, we cannot guess. But we are sure that God calls no man to a lifetime in the great contest without a heart-satisfying end, though

the end is not in sight. And along the way, what richness of reward, in the gratitude of our own hearts for such a calling, in the thanks of weak and discouraged souls we may have helped, in the sunlight of our Lord's approval. Is there any one here who is ashamed or afraid of entering on such a fight, or who would ridicule or hold back him who does enlist?

That oft-quoted school poem of Henry Newbolt's fairly sums up what we have been saying:

* "There's a moment's hush on the crowded field,
Six to make and the game to win:
A stubborn foe and a cruel fight,
Five minutes to play and one's strength all in.
And it's not for the sake of the field's applause,
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
But his captain's hand on his shoulder smote
'Play up! play up! and play the game!'

The sand of the desert is sodden red
Red with the wreck of a square that broke
The gatling's jammed and the colonel dead,
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.
The river of death has brimmed his banks,
And England's far, and Honor's a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks,
'Play up! play up! and play the game!'

This is the word that year by year
While in her place the school is set
Every one of her sons must hear,
And none that hears it dare forget.

* First verse altered.

This they all with a joyful mind
Bear through life like a torch in flame,
And falling fling to the next behind,
'Play up! play up! and play the game!'"

In the supreme game of life, the great contest of a man's soul, the good fight, we hear such a call from our Leader, and nerve ourselves again to answer with our best.

III

The Man Born Blind

JOHN ix.

IT was an autumn day in Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples were picking their way along the narrow street, a little straggling company of twos and threes. Many eyes were watching them, and people pointed at them as they passed. It was a Sabbath morning, but there was little of the Sabbath peace in it for that company, which had been a target for bitter feeling for days preceding. They must have moved like men on the edge of a volcano.

Jesus, inside those old city walls, was like a man caged among fierce animals, having need to walk warily lest they be at His throat. Enemies were all about Him. He was protected, in a way, by the friendship of the common people. The ruling classes said that He was a deceiver, a blasphemer, a man possessed of the devil; they had given orders for His arrest. But still no man laid hands on Him; the time was not ripe. They watched Him viciously; he was the centre of animated and bitter

discussion; but still He moved among them calmly and fearlessly, though only a day or two before they had taken up stones to stone Him. All His friends must have recognized that it would be well for Him to flee the city while He could, and leave its dangerous prisoning walls far behind. In Galilee He could still be measurably safe, but Jerusalem was a very trap set for His destruction.

It was in such an atmosphere of danger that He and His friends were passing along the street that Sabbath morning. So they came to the spot where, in some niche or doorway or street-opening, a blind beggar sat. Blind beggars were too common to excite remark. But one of the disciples happened to ask, out of curiosity, what was the cause of his misfortune; because this man had never even seen the world in which he lived—he had been born blind. Of course they thought it was a punishment for sin; no man could be so afflicted as that, except for cause. Was it his own sin, with which—as the Pharisees were saying a few hours later—he had come into the world already stained and doomed, or was his trouble a judgment on his father's sin, as even to-day so often is the case?

They might have discussed the question as they went on down the street, but Jesus stopped in front of the beggar, and made His answer there: an answer so warmly given that it has lived for men to

hear these nineteen centuries. "The blindness was not a punishment at all, either for sin of his own or his parents; it was for the glory of God, he suffering that he might shew forth God's works."

This was a strange view of human suffering. The heavens show forth the glory of God. The great achievements of men, and their high virtues, these bear witness to His character. But what can sickness or crippling affliction do but witness to the blight of sin, and the power of man's enemy?

Jesus evidently thought that it might be as eloquent of God as great deeds and high position. And unnumbered men and women since have borne their blindness, or pain, or infirmity the more patiently and nobly because they hoped that they, too, might by their very loss and sorrow show forth the praise of their Heavenly Father. It would be worth being patient a few years, if one might so prove worthy of the singular but painful trust God had allotted him, and fill faithfully an unwelcome and difficult position.

We do not know what Jesus said to the beggar. Something passed between them that made the young man—for it was a young man—come to His feet in quivering expectancy. The chance of seeing the great sunlit world, on which he had never looked, had suddenly dawned upon his life-long blindness. And already his endless dark had be-

come a prison-house, from which he panted to escape—from which this strange man, Jesus, should help him to be free.

Jesus spat on the ground and made clay, and anointed the man's eyes. And though the man had no eyes to see, and had no glimpse of the face of Jesus, yet if ever gentleness and love were in a human touch he felt it then, as Jesus pressed the sightless eyeballs; and the man's heart understood and answered, as we shall see later. Then he hurried away at Jesus' bidding, as fast as his stick could guide his footsteps, to the pool of Siloam, and down the long stair of rock-hewn steps that led to its waters. And there he washed, and looked up for the first time to the sky, and for the first time out upon the pleasant world.

He came back into the city another man, not pathetically slow and feeble, sounding his perilous way before him with his staff, but with elastic, independent footsteps, a man among his equals. Straight back he came to his old haunts, to proclaim the wonder and to receive congratulations. He was as well known in the city as is the blind man who sits reading on the sidewalk in Los Angeles—all were familiar with his face. Yet as he came back to his old corner, men said to one another, " Who is this coming that looks like the blind beggar? Surely it can't be the same man! "

Others said, "It is the very man himself, you can tell him by his clothes and his beggar's pouch."

But some would not believe it, insisting that it was only a resemblance. And so they gathered about him and argued his identity until he put argument out of the question by his insistence that he was the very man. They said, therefore, unto him: "How then were thine eyes opened?" He answered, "The man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed them, and said, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went away, and washed, and I received sight." And they said unto him, "Where is he?" He said, "I know not."

They stared at him open-mouthed. The thing was fairly impossible, and yet they could not get away from it. Here was the beggar-man looking at them. They must have asked him again and again to repeat the astounding story, that was so provokingly simple, before the truth really dawned upon them.

Then what was to be done! A miracle such as this ought to be looked into by the authorities. If Jesus had really done this thing, perhaps the Pharisees would believe on Him! Or perhaps some ill-disposed persons in the crowd sought a chance to embroil Jesus still further with the officers. So together they set off for the place where some representative gathering of the Pharisees, or committee

of the Sanhedrin, was known to be in session. Once there, the story was soon told, and the beggar pushed into the forefront, like a culprit before the court for sentence. And, indeed, the Pharisees must have looked on him like an offender. Innocent as he was, he had yet put them in an exceedingly awkward position, and how they were to deal with him was a puzzle, especially if he should prove intractable or obstinate.

So they asked him first to tell exactly how it happened—that might give some clue. But the man only said, " He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see! "

Some of the Pharisees said at once, " That settles the matter. This man Jesus is self-declared a Sabbath-breaker and despiser of the law. He made clay, which is flatly forbidden on the Sabbath, and he took the clay and rubbed it on the man's eyes, which is sheer lawlessness. A man who breaks the law is a bad man, whether he works cures or not. This beggar may have been healed, but it is the devil's work."

But others of the Pharisees—possibly with Nicodemus as spokesman—insisted just as strongly that a sinner would not and could not work such a miracle; and Jesus was, therefore, evidently of God. The man's judges were at odds among themselves. Some of them asked the beggar, as though that

would throw any light on the situation, "What do you say of him, in that he opened your eyes?" He said unhesitatingly, "He is a prophet."

Meantime there were those among them who solved the difficulty by denying it. "The whole thing is a swindle," they said. "This man never was blind. These disciples of Jesus are palming off an impostor; the man certainly resembles the blind beggar, but it is not he. Send for the real beggar's father and mother! They can tell, and then we shall know the truth." So some petty underling went off on a run for the man's parents, and the crowd waited to see the end. They came back, an old, humble couple, timid and frightened, and bowed before the court.

"You see that man; is he your son, that you say was born blind? If so, how does it come that he is able to see?"

"Yes, he is our son; we are sure of that, and that he was born blind. But how he comes to see, or who healed him, we don't know. Ask him; he is old enough; he can tell the facts." One may be sure that they had already heard the whole story again and again. But they were poor timid creatures, terrified of the Pharisees, and were evidently willing that their son should get himself out of trouble in his own way. So they said, "Ask him."

The attendants then brought him forward again,

in place of his parents. The Pharisees would try browbeating him. He was a common fellow, a beggar, surely they could make him see the thing as they saw it, and stop his mouth.

"Give glory to God," they said, "we know this man Jesus, and he is a sinner."

But the beggar was of different stuff from his parents—a sturdy man, a brave man; simple, but unafraid; of the stuff of Luther and John Hampden, and of our Puritan forebears. He merely said, "I don't know whether he is a sinner; but one thing I do know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

Both sides were losing their temper now. They began to badger him. "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

"I have just told you," he replied, "and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples?"

This was too much for their dignities. They reviled him. They abused him, as is the habit of such tribunals when no argument is left them. "You are his disciple," they said. "We are Moses' disciples. God spoke to him, but as for this man, who knows where he comes from?"

Then the proud, loyal spirit in the humble man broke out. "Why, this is a wonderful thing," he said, "that you don't know where he comes from,

and yet he opened my eyes. We all know that God does not hear sinners; but if a man is a worshipper of God, and does His will, him He hears. Since the world began, it was never heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing of this sort."

The insolence of such a rejoinder from a mere ignorant beggar, such as he, was of course beyond endurance; it made them stand aghast.

"Thou wast altogether born in sin—damned from birth—and dost thou teach us?" And they drove him from the place. Probably he was thrown out bodily by the officious underlings, with the certainty that he would be formally excommunicated from the synagogue a few days later.

So he went his way home, a marked man, under heavy penalty, like an apostate or a criminal. He must needs have been dazed at the swift changes of fortune that had come over him that day.

The news was soon brought to Jesus of what had happened. He was not going to leave the poor man in trouble. He had something better for him even than eyesight, that would last longer, and bring greater joys into his life. So He sought him out and found him; and the beggar saw the face of the friend who had touched his eyes with so divine a

touch, and Jesus looked into the eyes of the man who had so sturdily defended Him, at heavy cost.

Possibly each thanked the other. In any case Jesus quickly brought their talk to this strange question, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" Yes, surely the man would if Jesus wished him to. "Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?" Jesus answered, "Thou hast both seen him and he it is that talketh with thee." And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped Him.

And here he passes forever out of sight. We are only sure that he was a disciple after his Lord's heart, true and leal, and if he was presently hounded out of Jerusalem with the others, he went bearing witness to the word, and to Jesus Christ, his Lord. We do not know his name, and probably he was of very humble station. But well would it be for you and me if we were as gratefully sure of what the great Friend has done for us, and if we proved as loyal witnesses to His power and goodness.

For notice now the two brief lessons that lie agreeably plain upon the surface. We judge a tree by its fruits. We judge a man by his actions. It is a shrewd, safe way of judgment. And the blind beggar was on sure ground when he argued that if Jesus were a bad man He would not and could not work such miracles of love and pity. They were godlike, and Jesus must be a godlike man. As some

said later, "Can a demon open the eyes of the blind? These are not the sayings of one possessed of a demon." The words and works of Jesus demand not only an explanation, but an adequate explanation. And the only cause that could explain His life to His friends was that God was in Him, and spoke and worked through Him.

Every year I find myself coming more and more under the power of this argument in judging of the person of Jesus. Was He a man only, like ourselves, but infinitely better, or was He, as His friends have always believed and taught, more than man, the Son of God, in a unique and unapproached relation?

From the very beginning, as Dr. C. R. Brown has so forcibly pointed out, there have been this high view and this low view of Jesus' person. That which claimed less for Him has almost always had strong champions, often men not only of unusual culture and intellectual strength, but men of winsome and noble life. Yet always and everywhere the low view of Jesus' person has been in the long run a fruitless and sterile principle—unable to win victories, unable to subdue strongholds of sin, unable to propagate and sustain itself. Influential as it may have been for a time, it has never been a virile and conquering faith. The seeds of death have always been in it.

While, on the contrary, the high view of Jesus' person has been in every corner of the world a divine and thrilling power of life. Often it has been overlaid by superstition or bigotry, but always it has burst its bonds, and has wrought its own proper effects, cleansing, redeeming, transforming, in the very power of God. No degradation is too profound for it to relieve, no race of men is too savage or debased for it to reach and save. It is a living spring of truth and purity and honor, wherever it touches the hearts of men.

These are not the works of a delusion and an untruth! The whole moral integrity of the universe would seem to be shaken if this now world-wide stream of moral energy came from the muddy fountain of an imposture, whether wilful or unintended. The word which is a word of life for millions is not a word destined to perish because untrue. We rest upon the high view of Jesus' person, with the blind beggar, with John, and Paul, and Peter, and with all the modern apostles to a lost world, with Livingstone, and Gilmore, and Paton, with Grenfell, and Mott, and Jacob Riis, and Mrs. Booth, and still say of Him, as did an anxious, doubting soul of old, " My Lord and my God! "

And once more, see how great a gainer was this blind man for his sturdy, unhesitating confession of his Friend and Helper. He stood firm in his

gratitude and loyalty in the face of threats and danger, and his loyalty led him straight to Jesus' life-long friendship. He might easily have crept away from any further association with Jesus, as many another did. He had never even seen his physician. He might easily have said, " It does not matter much who touched me. The mercy is from God; it is enough to give glory to Him." And so he would have escaped all the perplexity and unpopularity that came upon him just as soon as he insisted on a devoted loyalty to the man Jesus, who had touched his eyes.

There are only a few causes in life that are worth this brave, uncompromising loyalty, that refuses to count the cost. But gratitude to Jesus Christ, the Saviour, has always stood first and glorious, far above them all.

There, for instance, was that poor noble old philosopher, Galileo, standing like this blind beggar before a threatening tribunal that sought to browbeat him out of the truth! And we hear him saying—he who knew of the motions of the heavenly bodies as we know of them—we hear him saying, broken and terrified in spirit, " I abjure, curse, and detest the false and unscriptural doctrine that the earth moves and is not the centre of the world."

And men do not condemn him. There are few scientific doctrines for which a man will go to the

torture that threatened Galileo. But far above all scientific loyalties, shining and illustrious in its claims, is the loyalty of personal gratitude to Jesus Christ, for which an unnumbered multitude have gone bravely, even if in fear and weakness, to the threatened death.

And greatly do we need, like this blind man, to give sharp definition to our recognition of what Jesus Christ has done for us, that our gratitude may be living and powerful over us, and that our trust in His friendship and help for the future may be strong and full of joy. Would that Jesus had laid His own fingers on our eyes, that we might have felt His touch and looked up into His face of love. But we must walk our whole way by faith alone. And yet, Jesus Christ has met us! He has done more for us even than for that blind beggar. God's mercy has reached us through Him and through Him only. It is the fact of His death and life that has broken the power of sin in our lives. It is on His promises that all our hope of the future rests.

We can easily dissolve in a nebulous uncertainty all that has come to us through Jesus Christ, and go without the bond of gratitude and fellowship between us, all our days. But how unspeakably shall we be the losers, if we so lose the richest and most fruitful relationship of the human soul!

Let us count up what He has done for us. Let us make confession of His goodness and our indebtedness. Let us begin each day with a new thanksgiving and reckon the future in terms of His abiding presence and helpfulness. And we also, in this close natural friendship with Jesus Christ, shall find, like the blind man, that God is taking possession of our lives.

IV

Making a Convenience of Christ

"*He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take his cross, and follow after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; aud he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*"—MATT. 10:37-9.

THERE is no doubt that human nature would only too gladly make a convenience of Jesus Christ. None of us care to pay for that which may be had for nothing. In these wise late days we press into our service all the wisdom of the ages. Wherever we can gather up a thought of inspiration or comfort or enlightenment, we appropriate it gladly as our inheritance from the past, whether it be from Hebrew prophet, or Indian sage, or Greek philosopher. We are the heirs of the ages, and while we own our indebtedness to them, we have no means of paying them this debt, nor do we come under any concrete obligation.

And so it is natural, perhaps, that when our eager yet self-indulgent generation comes to the

words and works of Jesus, now the common property of the race for near two thousand years, it should freely seize upon every idea they hold that is ethically uplifting or spiritually helpful. We admit that no other man has ever brought so great a light and help to his fellow-men. We own Him more than we can estimate. But so also do we own a debt of gratitude to many another leader of men on whom the past has closed. To Socrates and Plato, to Epictetus and to Marcus Aurelius, to Paul, and John, and Dante, and Pascal, and Shakespeare, Goethe, and Emerson, and Browning, and a host of others; not directly to them all, but at least indirectly and in a general way.

Yet so much does our debt to Jesus surpass all these, that we are willing even to count ourselves students, disciples, of His; to be classed with those who count Him the supreme spiritual leader of all time, and who would wish to be considered followers of His ideals. And with good reason, too! How much solid comfort His words have brought us! How inspiring and fruitful in our lives some of His spiritual conceptions have proved! What a moral help and safeguard we have found in His example! No wonder we are willing to admit our indebtedness to Him, and to allow men to know our appreciation of Him, and even to call us—in a conventional and guarded way—followers of His

teaching. He has been a great help to us undeniably.

We should be foolish, should we not, to deny ourselves this help! I am not going to read Shakspeare the less, or cut off one atom of the pleasure he gives me, because I cannot make him any return for the favor. What he can give me I have a right to take; and if it is simply making a convenience of him, well and good, let it stand at that! He serves me, and I use whatever service he can render. And so of Jesus of Nazareth! His was a great soul, and His words are a great help to me. I reverently admit my debt to Him. But as for going further, for putting a yoke on my neck, becoming a follower of His in the sense that I must accept all His teachings and follow all His commands, some of which are both disagreeable and inconvenient, as for becoming an open partisan of His in the sense of being what is called a Christian, to stand by Him and His ways and His policies at all times and under all conditions, like the pledged friend of a living man, it is out of the question. It would be irksome, and awkward, and inconvenient in many ways, and is simply not to be thought of. What Jesus can contribute to my life, without disordering it, I am willing to take, but further, at present, I cannot go. This is what many say.

What answer Jesus makes to this attitude of our

day, you know. We have His answer in His own words in our text. Love he asks for, first of all—a love that outwears life and death. Browning, or Dante, or Plato, we may love or not, if we are their followers—but our Lord Jesus, in what dark are we wandering if we have no love of Him!

The cross He insists upon. Elsewhere He speaks of the burden as a yoke. But whether it be yoke or cross no man becomes His follower save at a price—at a cost. He who would make a convenience of Christ is met by Jesus at the outset with this heavy inconvenience of something that it bends the will to bear.

And to make His demands clearer still, though with all His heart He yearned for friends, if He could only have had them at a less price, He asks for life. The furthest reaching claim of all! For the whole sum of a man's powers, and hopes, and possibilities; that one should put it in His hands, trusting Him with its use. These are dear terms on which to be a Christian, are they not?

No doubt Jesus was and is patient and sympathetic beyond all our thought with those who are groping after Him honestly, much hindered and darkened by doubt and ignorance and selfishness. Surely he counts many His followers whom we might look upon askance. But for the church or society that would complacently use Him as far as

is agreeable, making of Him a spiritual convenience, but without sharing His love, or His unpopularity, or His self-devotion to the lost, from them He would seem to turn utterly away.

Do not we know something of a church that, e.g., claims all the comfort of Jesus' gospel, but with growing wealth gives less and less each year to preach that gospel to the whole creation; enjoying its convenient application to themselves, but repudiating the inconvenience of being made messengers to others—that will not take the trouble to stand with Him as the Seeker of the lost? Or of a church that probably talks more of Jesus than it ever did, but that widely forgets that to love Him is at once the gladdest and most necessary element in a disciple's life; so that with all its talk of ethical and social service it is a church grown cold and passionless? Or of a society that is more and more pathetically afraid of pain or poverty or hardness of any kind, that adds new luxuries and demands new amusements every year, that wants every ray of cheer or peace or comfort that Jesus shed on life, but that fears to come to close grips with Him lest He somehow break in upon its ease? And we know individuals who are tempted always to get as much as possible from Christ, while giving as little as may be in return. And there are some whose dearest hopes, in their heart of hearts, centre

on Him, and who yet are unwilling even to confess Him as the Lord and Master of their lives.

Now all of this, in comparison with the white heat of earnestness and love in these words of Jesus about discipleship, is cold, calculating cowardice and selfish prudence. It is making a convenience of Christ. It is not worthy of sons and daughters of God, to whom His eternal grace and mercy have come through Jesus Christ. And it is only possible for those who have drifted out of touch with the actual gospel of the New Testament, who have forgotten how great and free it is, how it throbs with love and new strength for life, and how it lays answering demands on the deepest energies of our souls.

See now how Jesus deals with this strong tendency of human nature to deal with Him weakly and unworthily, following Him cautiously and with prudent calculations as to where one is going. In His calls to men to follow Him, how far does He make it easier for them to obey, by recognizing their cowardice and love of ease, and conceding something to their various weaknesses? And here instantly the fact emerges, conspicuous, unmistakable, that Jesus conceded nothing! He spoke to those weak, tempted men and women of His time as though they were divinely heroic. Confidently, and without apology or hesitation, He made demands

on His would-be followers, that were sublime in their contempt for human love of bargaining and compromise. He treated—and the heart of humanity has thrilled in answer to such treatment—he treated their sloth and cowardice and love of ease with utter disregard, as though they were not. He made no provision for them. He trusted to a great love to consume them and make them powerless. He would not admit that Levi or Zaccheus, or you or I, are necessarily held in bondage to them. He speaks with a quiet assurance of His right so to command, and of our power to obey.

You know the two classes of leaders! One that gains followers by asking so little of men that they stand to risk nothing in case they fail; and the other, that appeals to the heroic in men, asking them to risk everything—like Garibaldi in divided Italy, or Pizarro on the Isle of Gallo. All the forlorn hopes and great triumphs of the world have been led by such leaders. The great achievements of our race have been won by men and women who hurled themselves upon difficulty at the call of such heroic contempt for odds of pain and hardship.

And chief among all the world's throng of leaders who have scorned even to recognize the latent cowardice in their followers' hearts, stands Jesus Christ. He, alone among men, knew how much the human

heart would do and dare for such a leader and for such a cause. He alone had courage to ask so much—to ask for the uttermost reach of self-surrender—because He knew the immeasurable force of divine love in its appeal. And He had faith to foresee the ever-growing multitude who would choose rather to stand with Him in death, than to stand apart from Him in the most voluptuous joys of life.

In early days, by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus broke in on the daily bread-winning of those fishermen with the peremptory bidding to leave their fish and nets and boats, and partners in the business, and take up a life of utter strangeness as His personal attendants. He offered no halfway compromise; He asked unhesitatingly for what only a king might command. But He knew how the heroic spirit of self-devotion was there, waiting for an appeal; and from that day they were His, to do as He would, until neither Herod nor Nero could shake their constancy.

Then Levi was appealed to, in his very office in the custom-house, to shake himself free from all his past and become an attendant on an itinerant rabbi. And then began those utterances that steadily deepened in tone, as He drew nearer to the heart of the world's sin.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord,

shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

" Strive to enter in by the narrow door, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able."

" Think not that I came to send peace on the earth. I came not to send peace but a sword."

" He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and he that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me."

Then those words spoken out of great trouble of His own: " If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

And how He sifted those who would have lightly become His companions! Here is one who says: " I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." But Jesus made answer, " Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

And another said, " I will follow thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house." And Jesus said, " No man, having put

his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Still later, when there went with Him great multitudes, He turned and said unto them:

"If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

There are other utterances, closely allied to these —as on the hopelessness of serving God and mammon, the relative worthlessness to us of a hand or foot or eye that causes us to stumble, the necessity of becoming like little children if we would enter the kingdom of God. These are the chief and most characteristic utterances of our Lord on the general subject of discipleship. They are hard sayings! What are we to do with them, and how are we to make a place for them in a church that would make a convenience of Jesus Christ?

We feel the need of something easier to begin with. We would like to plead that we are not the sort of stuff out of which heroes are made: that we have not had the sort of upbringing to make us companions of the pure and holy One: that it is in any case impossible for us to live a continuous life of obedience; we could manage three days a week, on an average, or even four, but that we are accustomed to being taken off our feet by the reac-

tion from any special moral endeavor, and if we became Christians this would be glaringly apparent. Or that we are naturally sceptical, or naturally independent, or naturally pleasure-loving, or what not. So that, in a word, if we are to be brought through life with the minimum of friction and unpleasantness, we must have a less heroic treatment than the unqualified command to follow Jesus Christ as sworn companions and disciples.

But the answer of our Lord to such a hesitating disciple is what we know it to be. With contempt for the "minimum of unpleasantness," with utter ignoring of the poor stuff out of which we are made, with denial of disabling weakness, our Lord, firm and confident in His love for us, only bids us the more exactingly to deny ourselves and take up our cross and come after Him.

And that is just the message for which we hunger —the command of one who perfectly knows the limitations of our weakness; who knows that it has not disabled us, and cannot disable us if we will listen to His voice. Who knows the limits of our unprofitableness; knows that we are not unprofitable, but worthy of a high calling. Knows the limits of our cowardice and love of ease,—that we are not cowards by nature, or sold in helpless slavery to love or comfort, but that we have still the spirit of free men, from which heroes and martyrs spring.

And then, with this hardness of service reiterated and thrust upon our view, He calls us, the pleasure-loving, to rise up and follow Him,—to do as He will have us do unto the end, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer; to go to the altar or to the plough, to Central Africa or the kitchen, to labor mightily or to lie still in bodily pain while the great world moves on without us.

He will take no less! We may be able to join the Catholic church for less, or the Methodist or the Congregational. But we cannot join Jesus Christ for less. He makes the claim with the tenderness and love of a mother, but with the unalterable firmness of the righteous God.

He cannot take less! One cannot move the human soul like a puppet, as caprice suggests, any more than one can compel the lightning; each has its laws, that laugh at our caprice. And God knows that, for the work He has to do with us, nothing less than "no compromise" will answer. His aim is not to see how many weak, cowardly, selfish souls can at last be piloted into heaven, but to lead us on to win the estate of children of God. And half-decisions, for such piloting, are useless. Half-persuaded, half-wilful, half-mutinous followers can be piloted nowhere—they are the sport of circumstance. No man, least of all themselves, can tell where they will be a twelve-month from to-day.

And we would not have Him take less. For a destiny that reaches on without an end, we do not want to be taken at our weakest and meanest. If He sees better in us, if He is confident that we are capable of heroic patience, then, as He loves us, let Him appeal to it, and resolutely refuse our poor pleadings for a less exacting calling or a meaner birthright. And if He sees that we, who are so ready thus to make of Him a convenience only, may be His friends forever, may know His heart and enter into His heart's love, then who would have Him make easy for us the way to the shameful life of evaded privilege and obligation?

It is a great joy to be able to bring with confidence the message that the call of Jesus to His followers is something that reaches to the last fibre of their capacity; that the bond between them is the personal bond of an undying love, with all the obligation that such a love entails: and that the New Testament knows no other way for a disciple to live with Christ than on these great heroic terms of personal devotion,—a devotion of trifling beginnings, it may be, with us, but of an infinite depth and efficiency with Him.

Suppose less were possible! That His people could walk with Him on the basis simply of His spiritual convenience to their souls! What would become of us when our souls stand face to face with

the elemental emergencies of life, in times of great moral temptation, in days of bewildering physical prostration, in the grip of heavy sorrow, or in the hour of death? What unspeakable loss is ours if Jesus Christ then is only the dull memory of an ethical convenience. But if in such hours He is still perceived to be the one who hath loved us and loosed us from our sins, to whom we have given ourselves unshakably and whose we are in distress or sunshine, then, indeed, the truth of God is found to reach as far as human need.

So then, let us meet His offers heroically, as He would have us. Not bargaining to see how little He will exact, but rejoicing to choose Him and all His will for us. And if He would have us confess Him before men, let us exult that we may openly, unhesitatingly, take our stand with Him, and feel the thrill of its eternal promise and its joy. It was he who refused the great renunciation who went away sorrowful; it is those who measure conveniences with their Saviour who wear out the heavy lives; but always the joy of the Lord is for those who, looking unto Him, fear not to admit Him wholly to their hearts.

V

With Feet of Clay

"Be thou sober in all things; suffer hardship . . . . fulfil thy ministry."—2 TIM. 4:5.

IF you look out of the car window on the left side, as you go up by train from Jaffa to Jerusalem, you will see, after you have begun to enter the hill country, the site of the village of Zorah: perched high up on the shoulder of the mountain, just under the eaves, as has been said, of Judah's mountain home. It was the home of one of the heroes of our own childhood, of one of the judges of Israel; of the great tribal hero of the Danites, the strong man, Samson.

It was as beautiful a spot for a quiet boyhood home as one might find. But in that day the land lay under the oppression of its enemies, the Philistines of the plain. They were the rulers, meeting on half friendly terms with the tributary Hebrews, who lived in timid submission under their suzerainty. The village itself lay on the north slope, only a few miles distant from the Philistine lowlands, where the yellow grain in harvest time almost filled the

horizon, to the blue edge of the sea. There were the great caravan routes, the crowded heathen cities of the Philistines, the busy, fascinating, wicked world, that lay unknown and hateful to the Hebrews in their mountain home, beyond their ken or care.

Sequestered from this gay heathen life, in the tiny hill-town of Zorah, was the home of Samson's parents. They were of choice stock. She was a woman of beauty of face and character alike; and Manoah was a man known through all the country-side for his sterling virtue and godliness. They had no son. To them appeared an angel, to tell them that the son who should be born to them was dedicated to a great work—the freeing of the people of Jehovah from their oppressors. He should be a marked man from his birth, as one who had a divine calling. He should be a Nazirite—a man under a vow—who should drink no wine, and whose long hair should be the outward sign of an inward purity and consecration.

So he began life, a Hebrew Brahman, with every favor that can meet a life at its beginning; with godly, loving parents, and a peaceful, honorable home, in which he was to be trained for his high calling. A young fellow he was, as a lad, head and shoulders above any of his companions in stature, in strength, in spirits, in courage, and audacity, an athlete of renown—a man to have a career like

another Moses or Joshua, or David after him, as a leader and saviour of his people. And he was free from one of the great temptations of his tribe, he was a pledged teetotaler, a total abstainer from what made drunkards of so many of his fellows. And we may be sure that there was no prouder, more hopeful father or mother in all Israel than his mother, and his father Manoah.

But here begins a canker to show itself in the bud, a shadow to steal over the fairness of his prospects. He seems to have no ambition in any wise proportionate to his strength; to have no clear vision of a heroic life—of what any life must mean to a man who was to be a leader and helper of others. He has no self-control. He must have, like a spoiled child, the gratification of the moment, even if it breaks in disastrously on God's plan for his life.

Only three miles away, among the lower hills across the valley, was Timnath, occupied by the Philistines. And there was a girl who had caught his fancy. It did not matter that by birth and training and preference she was one who hated and despised his people; that she was an idol-worshipper, and of the race that he was sworn to fight to the death and overthrow; that to marry her was to cast his whole career into confusion, and probably break his mother's heart. She was what he

wanted at the moment, and the habits of years had made him think that what he wanted at the moment was the thing that he must have, and that somehow it must be right for him to have.

But what about the fidelity of a brave man—of a true patriot to his people? What about the honor of Jehovah, that it was his chiefest duty to uphold? How was he to be a leader of other young men against the enemy, if he went over to that enemy at the beginning? These were inconvenient thoughts, and, as we all know how to do, he put them aside and thought only how impossible was any other solution of the difficulty than the one that should gratify his desire. So he compelled his parents to arrange the marriage.

You can trace on the story in the chapter following. How he led a life apparently quite uncontrolled of any high or steadfast purpose. Sometimes he sulked, like Achilles, in his tent; and then in freakish rage would burst out in some useless act of private revenge against the enemy. He never led or attempted to lead his people against their oppressors. He was himself the sport of his own impulse. He was so helpless in the sight of pleasure that any noble achievement, demanding self-restraint, was quite impossible for him.

As the years went on, although he became a judge of Israel, it is evident that he was less and less

content to abide the simple life of a country village in Judea. He hankered for the paved city streets where gilded chariots went and came, where ships from strange lands lay at the piers, where foreign perfumes drifted out from baths and temples, and where the rugged simplicity of Hebrew peasants was but a jest for the luxurious. He used to go down into the cities of the plain for his pleasures. The nearer cities, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron, he had apparently often visited. They lay near at hand, for the whole scene of his life was but a tiny spot. In search of new diversion he even went as far as Gaza, where he was well-nigh surprised, and where only his giant strength saved him from captivity.

At last, after he had so lived as judge of Israel for twenty years, a disappointment and a failure, a useless border champion and freebooter, who might have been the divinely empowered saviour of his people, the Philistines planned to capture him without a struggle. There in his own valley—the Vale of Sorek—they laid a trap for him. And there he who had never taken the trouble to be his own master finds a master at last in others. They take him and put out his eyes—as Asiatic cruelty so loved to do—and harnessed him up in place of a donkey at the prison mill, there to push in dreary endless round at the polished beam that turned the upper stone.

And when his earthly sight went out, then his true sight came to him. There in the endless dark he could see his life unrolled; could see, in clear-cut relief, the career that Jehovah meant for him—that had been his, if only he had understood that he must himself work out the fulfilment of the angel's prophecy; if only he had been man enough to be sober in all things, to endure hardness, to fulfil his ministry. And now the chance was irrecoverably gone. Even were he set free, his eyes were out; the weakest of his enemies might put him to shame. Repentance and wisdom came to him there, too late to be of service other than to make him humble before his God.

The only atonement he could make was to secure one last revenge, and gladly throw away in it his tasteless, useless life—"let me die with the Philistines!" It was a sweet revenge, but as idle as all the other revenges of his life had been. It deepened the Philistine hatred and strengthened their oppression of his people, but brought the day of deliverance not an hour the nearer. It was a spectacular, memorable ending for a life memorable, as so many lives have been, for the magnificence of its promise and the pitifulness of its achievement.

The story of Samson is so plain and simple in its lessons for to-day that they scarce need pointing

out. It was a typical life of failure—typical of a few great lives, in every century, and an unnumbered multitude of humbler ones; lives of disappointment, like Coleridge, or De Quincey, or Edgar Allan Poe in literature, or like Aaron Burr, or Lord Randolph Churchill, or Charles Stuart Parnell in politics; and typical of the other unnoticed careers, whose name is legion, that each of us has watched in his circle of personal acquaintance, each one, however humble, bearing the burden of its own tragedy.

At the risk of dwelling on what is already obvious, let us notice two or three of the principles that are writ large in the story of the Danite hero, that unheroic judge of Israel. Let us not be afraid to notice, first, that he was a temperance man, in days when intemperance was the rule. He was a total abstainer amid a people where drunkenness was the undoing of a multitude. As a young man he was pointed out as exemplary; as one who stood upon a pledge, whose solemn Nazirite vow placed him at once beyond the common temptations of his fellows. And from many a temptation it did deliver him. But, as Milton says:

> "What boots it at one gate to make defence
> And at another to let in the foe?"

It was a worthy prohibition, and it is needed in our day even more than it was in his. But let

us not suppose that this prohibition, or any other single prohibition, is going to put us or any other man or any group of men on a plane of comparative moral safety. Let not the perfection of our defence or society's defence, at this point, blind us to the weakness at other points more exposed. Probably for us who are gathered here, taken as a whole, there is no one of the great temptations that is less insidious than the one of strong drink. Because at that point we are so well guarded by training, by habit, by prevalent social conditions, by self-respect. But any one who has lived for years among Mohammedan or Buddhist peoples, where drunkenness is practically unknown, realizes only too keenly that poor human nature, in spite of triumphant prohibition at one point, finds other ways of degradation that bring about, even more completely than drink, the ruin of the soul.

You and I cannot be honorable men without many negative virtues—without many hard and fast prohibitions in our lives, prohibitions that will necessarily differ with different men. But if you or I are leaning hard on the fact that, e.g., we don't swear, and don't smoke, and don't gamble, and don't drink, we shall find some day that, for leaning hard upon, they are rotten reeds that will break and leave us morally in the mire. We cannot live nobly without prohibitions; but a character built up of prohibi-

tions is still a weak and unworthy character that is likely to fall like the house founded upon the sands. There are such characters, and they are wholly exasperating and a trifle contemptible.

You see of course what I mean. For any strength or completeness of character there must be devotion to some positive constructive principle, such as Samson lacked. There must be the positive love for what is true and honorable and of good repute, that with even hand makes good the defence against the whole circle of what is vicious, or base, or mean. The need for that conserving, constructive love takes a man to God. In the case of Samson, fidelity to Jehovah should have been such a saving principle; it would have been worth a hundred Nazirite vows. As it was, his defence was like that of some Chinese forts that I have seen, absolutely impregnable at one point, but at some other point, behind those bristling Krupp cannon, lying all but open to the enemy. If a man would save his life from failure, he must have in it the great constructive force, operating everywhere and always along the line of his consciousness, of the love of God, of self-committal to Him. Then, only, will he be sure that there is no unguarded point.

Again, we see well enough in Samson's career the product of a life whose strength is sapped by self-indulgence, so that it is helpless in the sight of

pleasure. We see in him a man who, when confronted by any fascinating allurement, could see no way out of it but by yielding. The stern self-control, built up by years of resistance to petty gratifications, that could say peremptorily, "I will not," he never could fall back upon, because it never was his own—he had never earned it. When, at Timnath, vehement fascination blurred all the nobler deeper impulses of his soul, and he groped about for some habit of action that would still enable him to be true to the best when he could no longer see or feel it, he groped in vain—there was no such habit there.

Great temptations never come when God and heaven and the heavenly calling are quite clear. They would not be great temptations if they did. A great allurement confronts us, and lo! it seems to be the only thing on the horizon. Pleasure is before us, dazzling as the sun, and all else is blurred, and indistinct, and far-away. What we believed and what we determined last Sunday is vague and unreal as a dream. If, then, our only fixed habit is the one of gratifying any insistent compelling impulse, we shall be the sport of the tempter, helpless as thistledown in the path of a tornado.

If we could only see the working of this law in time! For the failures of life, the great tragedies

and the dull, prosaic, mean defeats, are the plain fruits of the habit of being always indulgent with one's self in little things. You know well the type of characters I mean; characters that a dozen times a day allow themselves the gratification that is just before them, simply because it offers the path of least resistance at the moment. It is quite possible, without thinking, to drift into a state where the pleasant thing to eat, the pleasant thing to wear, the pleasant place to go, the pleasant thing to do, the pleasant book to read, becomes almost our invariable choice, whether or not it conflicts with our better impulse; because at that precise moment we do not see any sufficiently compelling reason why we should not choose it. But the result is not only that the pleasant always wins, but that we become helpless to resist it—moral weaklings.

It is sober truth to say that this way is the very descent of Avernus. One day the irresistible pleasure will be one that can be had only at a cost—at a cost of our best ambition, even sometimes at a cost of reputation or of honor. And we shall be as helpless as the thousands of others, for whose presence the world is a poorer place to-day. If we are never stern with ourselves in little things, where shall we find, or beg, or borrow, the stern rectitude that shall hold us true in crucial times of trial!

Samson's high calling and ambitions, beginning

with a heavenly brightness, trailed off into the muddy ways of a foolish wastrel. But it was not of purpose or any evil intent, but because day in and day out his highest operative ambition was the love of the agreeable.

It is but one more step to notice how Samson lacked any ambition worthy of his strength. He had a huge endowment of power, but no adequate ambition to control it. Like an ocean steamer with the rudder of a fishing boat, he wallowed in the trough of life's sea. He lacked the vision of the heroic life! And for the lack of it his whole career, so far as we know it, was poor and mean and purposeless. If once there had dawned upon him the nobility and heroism of a life that should fulfil his ministry! But apparently he never caught a glimpse of it. And the great life, self-controlled, of one who should live for others, who should be the deliverer of a nation, never so much as kindled his imagination, much less ruled his will.

Here is the tragedy that is right in our midst—of which, it may be, we are a part. You may see the pity of it in any community or college; perhaps clearest of all among children, when choices are easiest to make. The tragedy of lives meant to be heroic, started to be heroic, like Samson's, drifting on into poor, commonplace, limited careers, for which the world will never be the better. They

might so easily be great and noble; not perhaps for the world to applaud, but really great, in the sight of God, with a greatness never to fade into insignificance. And, instead, for lack of a great compelling motive, because they never looked steadily to see what God would make of them, they never rise to heroism. The peril that made shipwreck of Samson is the same peril that haunts our way to-day.

Thank God! we know how one may triumph over it. In the face of Jesus Christ we see clearly what our life is meant to be. As we resolutely face His life, and think upon His words, we find Him—not as a matter of theory, but as a matter of fact—actually compelling our characters; putting our daily life under discipline for the heroic; giving us self-mastery. His example and His spirit are a light like noonday upon what our life was meant to be. Only we must face Him and His thought for us, clear-eyed, every day; and we shall have an ambition even greater than our strength, able to grip and mould and ennoble every capacity of our being. It is easier for us to look away, to forget, to befog His shining presence, and so follow our own way with ease, drifting with Samson to his end. In spite of our knowledge of Jesus Christ, it is easy for us also to lose all sight of the heroic life.

On the south coast of England, above the cliffs

of the Lizard, stands one of the most powerful sea-lights of the world. Two hundred and thirty feet above high water it is, and with an electric flash-light of a half million candle-power, visible for over forty miles. And yet, several years ago, the *Suevic,* a great ocean steamer, loaded with passengers and mails, went on the rocks in a gale of wind, just at the foot of that towering lighthouse, somehow failing to see it in the driving mist.

Even in such a community as this we may miss the sight of what our life should be—the sight that is so shining clear. We must needs look for it. Day by day we must invite its illumination of our soul. It is the heroic vision that makes the heroic man, and still, as in Paul's day, it is in "looking unto Jesus" that God's heroes overcome.

VI

The Ancient and Honorable Company of the Church

"The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."—1 TIM. 3:15.

JESUS CHRIST is always at the centre of the world's strife. He is the Prince of Peace, but He said that He came to bring not peace on earth but a sword. His presence developed here, and has roused ever since, as hot and malignant hatreds as the human heart can know. And the fight against those old, fierce, inveterate powers of evil is the hereditary fight and obligation of His church.

I have at home a photograph of a gale at sea, taken from the Land's End in England. You do not notice any waves—the ocean surface looks flat and beaten down by the weight of the wind. The waves are there, sweeping headlong to the shore with the rush of the Atlantic behind them; but unchecked and unopposed, their power does not betray itself; their headlong course has something of the deadly

smoothness of the rapids above Niagara. But just in the foreground stands the Longships Lighthouse, rooted in the living granite of a hidden reef of rock, immovable before the shock of these titanic forces; and there, there leaps up a perpendicular avalanche of white, a hundred feet in height, burying from sight the slender column of masonry. And the waters which elsewhere drive past so silently and unobserved under the smother of white foam, rage and howl and thunder so furiously in the rifts and chasms of the ledge, that men in the lighthouse are said to have gone demented with fear, after one night in that awful maelstrom of sound.

It is a fair illustration of the way in which Jesus Christ must needs stand at the centre of the world's strife. If He be thrust into the mid-current of human selfishness and passion, to stand immovable for the righteousness and love of God, He must needs feel the full shock and fury of resistance that such a stand involves. The tide of human interests might seem to be flowing quietly enough if unopposed, silent and deep and dangerous; but with that fronting presence of divine rebuke and opposition, it leaps into a tumult of rebellious protest.

You may talk as you will about the nobility of human nature and the latent goodness in all men, but

if you will effectively oppose even a single one of the lower vices of society, as did Anthony Comstock or Sergeant Petrosini in New York, you will find yourself assailed with a murderous hate that will shrink from no crime to compass your defeat. There is still a multitude of men and women, as old Jonathan Edwards used to say, who would kill God if they could. And to confront them vividly and steadily with the love of God, so much more piercing than His wrath, or with His insistent righteousness, with its inexorable demands, is still to feel the intensity of their opposition. As Paul said, "They that will live godly, shall suffer persecution." Even the witness of a godly life is a challenge to the active enmity of many minds.

You may seek out a sequestered corner, like this of ours, where all this is like a tale of arctic storms told in a summer garden; but we cannot live always in quiet waters. Out into the swirling current we must go, and there find and show what mettle we are of.

I would have you notice now where the Christian Church stands among the "many waters" of mankind,—for that oft-recurring phase of the New Testament is only a vivid metaphor for the eternally shifting and seething masses of society. Jesus Christ, as the revelation of God's will among men,

stood at the centre of strife. The waves of passionate refusal and resistance met about Him, rolled over Him, bruised and beat Him down to death. But, risen and triumphing, He still stands at the heart of the great struggle—the good fight of all good fights on earth. And in each generation the church, the federation and organization of His loyal disciples and followers, has, of necessity, inherited the glory and the peril of that strife; has had to be His voice, His witness, amid the babel of worldly outcries. With all its weakness and impurities, it has nevertheless remained the fellowship of those battling for their life, and for the lives of others, in loyalty to that Lord and Master; and as such the New Testament did not fear to call it the "church of the living God"—let who will revile it or despise it—the "pillar and ground of the truth."

Not of all truth, for the church has always walked as in a labyrinth of ignorance and error regarding many things! But of the one superb redeeming truth, that it had seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And that company of men and women, so fallible and frail, is further called the "body of Jesus Christ." A body still vulnerable, still on earth, still exposed to abuse and injury and suffering, as the thousands went down to torture and to death, and the long roll of the witnessing martyrs

was built up; but suffering on His behalf, enduring hardness under His leadership.

It has never been a fraternity of wise men, whom you could not ridicule; or a company of saints whom you could not criticise. It has always been what it was in Jesus' day or in Paul's, a very humble and fallible fellowship, of men and women being saved from what they were. Jesus was patient with its occasional conceit and pettiness, and Paul gave his life to it, though he knew, far better than any clever journalist to-day, how pathetic were its weaknesses. It has always had the defects inseparable from a membership of common men and not of angels. Yet it has always stood, perforce, like its Leader, at the heart of the world's strife. It has always been a fighting church; the ancient and honorable company of those who would make head against a world in arms. It has never been a body of cravens, or of invalids, or weaklings.

No fighting regiment in the world's armies to-day, proud of its long, long record of gallantry on many fields, in many lands, with its sheaves of tattered regimental colors, has a tithe of the record, or should have a tithe of the pride, that we have to-day in the inheritance of the pride and glory of a fighting regiment—a church militant—that has stood shoulder to shoulder about its Leader for nineteen hundred years. One can easily affect to be superior

to it, to despise it: can easily join in the old sneers, as old as the apostles, about its timidity and selfishness; but no man who would not display his ignorance can deny that it has led a glorious fighting life down to the present day, against every form of intrenched evil that it has come to recognize.

It has often been slow to recognize its duty; and portions of the church have sometimes been blinded as to a moral issue; as so many were blinded to the deep wrong of slavery, in the twenty years before 1861. But the mere fact that its members are honestly seeking, for their very life's sake, to keep in touch with Jesus Christ and to do His will, means that sooner or later they come out into the light and follow His leadership in spite of every confusing or opposing influence on earth. And so it will be in these new industrial and social problems of our generation. It will not follow the leaders of the hour, each so sure of his own programme, and each so indignant that the church will not make it its own. But as light comes it will assuredly follow the Great Leader and Friend of men, who can guide His people through the twentieth century as surely as through the third or the sixteenth.

A great many people will always be critical and sarcastic because the church cannot be used as an organization to undertake this reform or that, and

to carry it out—the prohibition movement, or suffrage movement, or some new campaign for clean politics or social purity or international peace, or the elimination of business competition. And others are restless because the church will not use its authority and organization directly to create and administer this or that department of civic charity or philanthropy—free baths, public parks and galleries, juvenile courts, and so on, in unending variety.

But the church is and always has been for the inspiration of the individual in the spirit of Christ, which is the very essence of the spirit of social service; so as to send him out in that spirit to play his part in all these various relationships of philanthropy and reform; to inspire them, and to create them, and to carry them on to success, in politics, and civic reform, and every phase of humanitarian effort. There was an age in which the church took these things into its own hands, to enforce them by its authority, and carry them on through its own organization, and compel their success by weight of its prestige. And that age was the poorest age that Christendom has ever seen.

It is not so that the church carries on its great warfare. It strikes at the centre of disease—at the sin that "weakens all the fine humanities of our nature," and works out into ever-changing mani-

festations of social wrong and selfishness. And it inspires not with a programme but with a divine eternal life, that is always laboring to seek out human needs and bring joy where misery has been supreme. So if you will look anywhere in the world to-day you will find the church behind the active fighting agencies for human good, wherever those agencies demand, not only machinery, but sacrifice of money and of life.

It is behind the hospitals of New York or Labrador or China, the leper asylums all over the Orient, the orphanages and rescue homes past counting in all lands. It is in the schools, and training institutes, and colleges, wherever civilization has not yet provided them; in homes and clubs for seamen and soldiers and railroad men, wherever the tempted congregate; in Young Men's Christian Associations and Young Women's Christian Associations in the cities of the world where men and women need a helping hand; in a hundred forms of settlement work and social and welfare work and mission work; in the world-wide fight against opium and whiskey, in anti-saloon work, and the struggle against the white slave traffic, and the black slave traffic in Africa or on the Congo, against child labor, and sweat-shop cruelty, and graft in politics, and so on and on. As the spirit of Jesus continually reveals itself to His disciples, the fellowship of believers in Him,

animated by His love, becomes the great fighting body of the world—greater than all its armies; with endless money behind it, and uncounted lives, and a devotion that lives and burns to-day as glowingly as it used to live and burn in Rome of the Cæsars, when Paul nursed the flame. The church of the living God is still the church militant, the church at war.

Men and women of this spirit have always wanted to get together, that together they might nourish the flame of love and devotion. It so easily dies down! Our enthusiasms unsupported so quickly cool and die. You could not keep apart those one hundred and twenty men and women who met after Jesus' death in an upper room in Jerusalem. The work they had to do, the burden they had to bear, was too great for them to do or bear scattered singly and unaided in their homes.

Without organization any great cause languishes. When Japan was standing against Russia for its national life, you might as well have expected it to win by turning loose a half million men on the shore of Korea, each bearing a sword or rifle as he saw fit, and each going his own way independently, to overthrow the enemy, as to expect the great fellowship of the disciples of Christ to fight effectively the good fight, without close ties of loyalty and discipline and organization. So there

has always been, not a loose multitude of believers in Jesus, but a church of Christ, holding closely together to nourish the flame of divine love among men for the sake of the race,—men and women knit together by a great need, a great gratitude, and a heavenly ambition, with Christ at the centre of the deathless fellowship.

Where do you stand in relation to it? Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it! Is it your clear purpose to be loyal to it till death? To build your life into it to the last ounce of its vital energy, as millions have done of the world's saints and noblest servants?

It would seem that the church would be a better church were it not so generously humble; if it did not invite to itself such utterly unfinished and imperfect men; if it did not so freely receive ordinary half-developed characters like ourselves—men and women half-Christian, half-selfish, half-believing, half-doubting; unstable, like Peter, and with clinging evil elements left over from the old life. It might be a better church if it were reserved for the noble souls, and great souls, and clean and devoted souls of our generation. But it is magnificent in its graciousness. It welcomes all who would be loyal to the Master—who would escape their meaner selves through His love and help. We cannot blame it or its Master for welcoming such as we so freely,

if we will only cleave to Him, and fight the good fight of His faith. It must needs have many imperfect soldiers in it if it enrolls such material.

But such as it is, what place do you give it? Is it possible that any of us should be not loyal to the last red drop of blood, but loftily superior, condescending, contemptuous? Can you imagine a man honestly desirous not only to plough his lonely furrow through life, but to throw in his life with all who will stand together resolutely for great ends, and yet turning away from this ancient and honorable company, covertly sneering at its humble folk and their old fashions and their unadaptability to modern ways? Can you draw the line between loyalty to the great Captain and Master, and loyalty to the world-wide family of those who love Him and bear His name?

If you will imagine what this State of California would be without the church as a centre of organized Christian opinion and effort in its midst, what any of our large towns would be if all the churches were withdrawn, you can understand what so clear-headed a man as Dr. C. R. Brown meant when he said that "the man who stays outside the church on the theory that he can be just as good a Christian without assuming the responsibilities of church membership, is a coward and a shirk." It is as-

suredly clear that there are good men outside the church; but it is very far from clear that you will be a good man if you refuse for yourself so plain a step of loyalty to Jesus Christ, your Master, as to ally yourself with the fellowship of His confessed servants.

You sometimes hear men speak as though the Christian Association were somehow a more satisfactory organization than the church, and as though membership in it might fairly take the place of allegiance to the broader, world-wide, life-long fellowship of all disciples. They forget how utterly the Young Men's Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association are the creation and child of the church; how the church wrought them out, and brought them forward into strength, and backs them everywhere with men and money and sympathy, guiding and inspiring them with that noble international committee of churchmen as the centre of the complex machinery. It is the church that lives and moves and works through the Christian Associations in every city in almost every land to-day, and without the church they would be dead in a night, as if stricken with the plague.

And we forget also how some day, looking back on life from the far limit of seventy years, even these full four years of Association life and influence will appear only as a quick-passing half-hour

in the long, arduous day of a completed life. But the fellowship of the church, our mothers' church and the church of our fathers, meets us in our infancy, follows our boyhood, calls to us through manhood in the trumpet-tones of the summons to bravery of service, comforts and sustains us through losses and sorrows as years multiply, and upholds us even in old age on the broad, strong current of Christian sympathy and overcoming faith and ministering love.

And when I say to myself, "The church is not as influential as it should be, and is not as pure as it should be," I turn and ask myself, "Are you doing the part of a true man in helping to make it pure and influential? Have you ever come up under your share of responsibility for its life? Are you contributing to its support, or do you leave altogether to others the duty of maintaining its helpfulness, that has meant so much to you already? Are you helping to make it pure, and worthy, and influential—are you treating it as you would wish its great Head and Master to find you treating it, were He to make sudden inquiry of your attitude?"

Not all of us are worthy to enter into the humble fellowship of the men and women who would make their life one of reverent gratitude and love to God their Saviour. But for as many as hope to

join one day in the great song of the church triumphant, "Unto Him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins by His blood," the clear, penetrating call is that to-day we should be found true and loyal to the hard-pressed, ever-battling company of the church militant.

VII

The Obedience of Jesus

"*Obedient even unto death.*"—PHIL. 2:8.

IN June, 1893, the Mediterranean squadron of the British fleet was manœuvring off Tripoli. The vessels were proceeding in a double column, twelve hundred yards apart, under command of Admiral Tryon on the *Victoria.* At a certain point the admiral signalled for both columns to reverse their course by turning inwards. It was instantly pointed out to the admiral, by the captain of the *Victoria,* that this was an impossible manœuvre, inasmuch as the ironclads could not turn in less than six hundred yards, and that the *Victoria* would be risking collision with the *Camperdown,* the leading warship of the other column. Three times Captain Bourke remonstrated, and the *Camperdown* also signalled for further instructions. But the order stood.

Both vessels began turning at the same time, and with breathless anxiety and horror the whole fleet looked on at the tragedy that followed. The two

men-of-war drew nearer, faced the danger, struggled too late to check their way, and came together, the great steel ram of the *Camperdown* tearing out the side of her consort, which began to heel over and sink almost immediately. Perfect order was maintained, and the swarms of men went down to their death like heroes. But more than half of the *Victoria's* six hundred men were drowned before their companions's eyes within fifteen minutes.

None will ever know what was in the admiral's mind, whether perhaps it had suddenly failed him for a few moments, for he went down with his ship, remorsefully refusing all help until the last. But when the court-martial was held in England upon the captains who carried out the fatal manœuvre in obedience to orders, and who were furiously blamed for so doing, England refused in any wise to censure them, because "it is not in the best interests of the service to blame them for obedience to their commander-in-chief." The whole efficiency of the navy and the whole stability of the empire rested upon unquestioning obedience to a superior's orders; and even the lives of the three hundred and fifty men were not too great a price to pay for the unhesitating maintenance of that first essential of national greatness.

We are apt to think as children that obedience is a virtue required of us only, but that as we grow

up to the pleasant freedom of men and women we become independent and may do as we please. Alas, for our childish hopes of independence! They are never realized, unless we go the fool's way, to our own undoing. Rather do we come to see that nothing noble, nothing great, nothing enduring can be built up without obedience, subordination, to some greater controlling and directing mind. An army without subordination is a mob. A republic without obedience is a chaos of license and corruption. A life without obedience is a life without character or purpose. Some people instinctively rebel against the idea of authority, and cripple their lives by their self-will; but unless we are as wise as God, and as good as our Heavenly Father, we must be grateful for a better will than ours to guide us and control.

And so we may say truly that the first of all virtues is the virtue of obedience. It lies behind all others, in the building up of a character or an empire. And if no nation can achieve greatness without this self-control of subordination permeating its people, no more can so great an enterprise as the Kingdom of God be carried on without it. Jesus came to establish the Kingdom of God on earth—to set it on its glorious, endless way. And He lived, Himself, under the terms of this inexorable demand for unquestioning obedience. He

lived in this respect as you and I must live, if we are to build up instead of break down the kingdom. He left us an example, that we should follow His steps; Himself not always understanding, not foreseeing the future, but trusting the wisdom of His Father's will and minding it, as a child minds, who is not wise enough to act alone.

Does this seem to you at all incongruous with the character of Him who was called the Son of God? If so, it is because we have allowed ourselves to forget the unmistakable picture drawn by the New Testament of His humanity. It is not that of a conscious God, originating His own purposes, or sharing, as with a co-equal will and understanding, the thoughts and purposes of the Father. Jesus plainly represents Himself as a man under orders, in subordination to the will of another. "My Father," He said, "is greater than I. The words I speak to you are not mine, but his. It is he who works the powers that appear through me. I keep his commandments. I do always the things that are pleasing in his sight. It is his will, not mine, that I seek when the way is doubtful. Therefore doth the Father love me, because I keep his commandments."

That is a very clear picture of a Leader who set the example to all His followers, of a man under authority, listening for instructions, and

carrying them out faithfully wherever they might lead.

Notice how naturally and how gradually He came to be the most obedient among all the sons of men. He did not, at the beginning of His life, acknowledge and accept for Himself the whole plan of God for His thirty years, that should make Him a man of sorrows and bring Him to an early death. "He learned obedience"—so says the writer of Hebrews—"by the things that He suffered." He did not anticipate the soul-struggle of Gethsemane when He was a little lad of six. Instead, He played about the courtyard and in and out of His father's shop, a perfect child among children, merry in the sunshine; but even then attentive to His mother's voice, obedient and honorable in the little obligations that a child of six must carry. The mysterious call of the deep plans of God for the salvation of mankind reached Him then only as Joseph called from the workshop or Mary from the latticed window. But it was divine, the way in which He answered—as boys and girls to-day may touch the godlike in the way they meet their parents' wish.

Later, it is evident that He was thinking much on God's plans for His life, and was searching to know how best He could be about His Father's business. You remember how this puzzling search led Him to the temple when He was but twelve;

and then led Him submissively back to His country home, there to be subject to His parents.

And when He had come to be about thirty years old, He was well-skilled in a perfect, sympathetic obedience, when the call came to Him to drop the tools of an artisan and go out among the world of men. Even then the way was not one of untroubled clearness! Clouds and darkness were round it at the very beginning, when the adversary sought to confuse Him and mislead Him, and when He could only wait for God, as did tempted saints of old. He prayed there in the desert, that He might see light, and that He might be strong to follow it. And as He saw it, He was obedient to the heavenly vision.

So the common days came and went—the happy expectant days of His ministry in Galilee, when the multitudes followed Him, and when He could go about doing good, following His heart's desire. Yet even in these days He sought not His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. Often He rose up before day to talk with His Father, long and undisturbed, that He might better understand His will. So that when the shadow began to close down upon His life, and He came to realize that His way was leading inevitably to an abyss of failure and shame and distress, He obeyed still, as readily as when a child. And so was found at the end "obe-

dient even unto death." And if He is the Captain of our salvation to-day, and a Saviour even for the ends of the earth, it is because He was Himself made perfect in obedience by suffering.

I am sure there is none here who can miss the lesson of these facts. We do not consider them for their academic or historic interest, but because they are of vital concern to every one of us. We also, like Jesus, find ourselves here for a few years among men, set among innumerable perplexities and possibilities, to overcome, or to be overcome; to win our way through with joy at the end, or to come to our last day with disappointment and in fear. Our career is not of such consequence to the world as was that of Jesus, but to us it is of pathetic, infinite concern. Not all the universe is of such overwhelming moment to us as is the question whether we win or lose, whether our lives are found worthy or worthless in the great appraisal.

And in the career of Jesus we see the factors of our own destiny writ large. The essential conditions of our own struggle are there set forth in heroic size. And if for Him, the Leader, obedience was the first condition of success, how much more for us who follow. If He who was the mighty and sinless One had need to wait daily upon the will of God, how ever shall we find our way through

life's labyrinthine temptations by our own strength and wisdom! Illusion is all about us! There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end of that way is death. How shall we know? How shall we save ourselves from the choices that will one day cover us with confusion?

If Jesus had miscalculated, there in the desert, if He had sought to save His life and His future work by making bread so that He might not die there of starvation, He would have made shipwreck of His career, as men are making shipwreck of their lives about us every day. But He held inflexibly to His Father's will, obeying where He could not see. There is no other certain hope for us. It cannot be in occasional efforts at obedience, at certain crises, where we are afraid to go alone: in experiments with it, when we are in certain moods. That is worthless. It is only in the simple yet tremendous choice of the will of God for our life—a choice as deep as the unexplored depths of our soul—not for a day, but forever; not in one thing, but in every experience of life and death.

It was so that Jesus obeyed. And yet a child can do that. A weak and tempted man can do it. As surely as God is in us, we can make such a choice. We may falter at times, we may be shaken to and fro as roughly as the shipwrecked sailor being drawn ashore in the life-buoy is battered by

the waves; but the life-line does not break. We shall never utterly let go; because such a choice, born of God, is renewed by Him again and again, as day follows day. But there is no other choice that will lead us home—no other than obedience. It made of Jesus a perfect Saviour. It will make us also ready and perfect for the mission on which God would send us, whether it be to the end of the world, or whether it hems us in to a cottage and a kitchen, or shuts us up to the tiny ignoble kingdom of an invalid's room.

We need to notice two things about this triumphant obedience of Jesus. It was for Him a way of confidence, and a way of joy. It is cruelly hard to obey, if you have not confidence in the one who commands—if you are not sure that his order is completely wise. It was a fearful predicament in which Captain Bourke was placed, with his superior officer facing him there on the bridge, and yet with the sickening fear that the admiral was blindly sending them to death. It must have been with a bitter heart that the Earl of Cardigan, at Balaklava, led his beloved brigade of cavalry on that wild, futile charge that left it a pitiful remnant of its former strength.

And had Jesus been compelled to walk that last twelve months, steadily toward the cross, with the slightest doubt as to His Father's perfect wisdom

and perfect love, it would have been a hopeless task. But He was unafraid. There could be no mistake. However His spirit might recoil, His confidence in His Father's leading was complete. He did pray that the cup might not be so bitter, but only if His Father should will it so. He trusted Him.

We cannot hope for any better fortune. We cannot obey, in the long run, without a perfect confidence that we are safe in doing so, and only safe as we obey. We can only accept God's will as we are satisfied that it knows us perfectly, and knows whither it is sending us, and sends us there in sympathy and love. It is not enough to tell us, as did some of the divines of a century ago, that God is sovereign, and that His sovereign will must be enough for us, even though it decrees our temporal and eternal sorrow. The remnants of such hideous fears still cling to men. They paralyze obedience. We need to trust in God as the little daughter trusts her father, knowing instinctively that he loves her better than his life, and that he only seeks her happiness: so that what God chooses for us, we know He chooses as the true lover of our souls, and with a perfect comprehension of our needs and our capacities.

It is not so that we often think of God. We fear to submit ourselves absolutely to His will, lest it should ask of us something extravagant or beyond

our power, something too hard or disappointing or painful for us ever to choose.

Certain college fraternities have sometimes demanded of candidates for initiation that for several days they should obey any order laid upon them; and so you might see men on the streets of the college town going through the most ridiculous or humiliating performances. Men often treat God as though He would deal with them in this irrational fashion if they once gave themselves up absolutely to His control. They are afraid of what they might be asked to do. They fear that God may give them His orders through dreams, or angels, or sudden strange impressions, without consulting them, or first referring His bidding to their judgment, and that so some astonishing and over-exacting task might at any moment be laid upon them, against their wish and soberer reason. But it is only through our reason and our soberest judgment that God speaks to us, with fullest reference to our tastes and our capacities, our weaknesses and limitations; not compelling us and overruling us, but using our thought, and our judgment, and our conscience, to make plain to us what we, upon our fullest consideration, recognize that we ought to do, and what, in the fullest enlightenment of our spirit, we wish and choose to do.

It is so that God's will came to Jesus, and it is

so that it comes to us. Not violently and arbitrarily, but naturally and spontaneously, as our minds and wills come to perceive and appropriate His thoughts. So that we may have confidence in God. He will not lead us roughly or carelessly; He will make no mistakes. When the father holds the little child's hand, every footstep is guided by a tender thoughtfulness. And we are safe in yielding a trusting hand to God.

But to Jesus, as to us, the way of obedience was the way of joy. Not always at the moment! It is only the lower and baser animals whose only thought of happiness is instant gratification. And for Jesus it was sometimes the joy set before Him that brightened the way of submission. But He was not mocking His companions when He bequeathed to them "his joy." The deepest, sweetest joy that earth can know was in Jesus' heart, night by night, as He turned to sleep. Would you have preferred Pilate's pillow or King Herod's, or that wealthy man, Simon's?

The way of joy is a strange one. You do not find it quite where you look for it. We think we see its presence in the luxurious home, or on the white deck of the yacht lying at anchor, or in the applause of the crowd,—and are astonished to learn that those men are morose, or disappointed, or nervously broken, and that joy has passed them by.

And then you may see—as I have often seen—a Sister of the Salvation Army, whose home and life is in the reeking, sodden slums of a great city; and from her face looks out on you an exquisite happiness and peace, such as Jesus knew, as He, too, went on His difficult way obeying God. It is impossible to say where the way of joy will lie for you. You may think it is in the halls or laboratories of a great city, and it may be in the loneliness of Central Asia, or in the humblest of unnoticed tasks at home. It is where, and only where, you can be in the presence of the great Leader and Captain, loyally obedient to His call.

Not long ago a lady was visiting the great leper hospital in Quito, Ecuador. Back and forth she went through its wards and corridors, shuddering at that awful aggregation of misery, that made her forget the blue sky and smiling sun without. She had as her conductor the Mother Superior of the house, who had been in charge for twelve years, and who still had a face calm, resolute, and sweet, with the light upon it of a deep content. "And how can you endure it to spend your life among such scenes?" asked the visitor. In answer she led the way to a tiny chapel hung in white, and pointed to a picture hanging there, the picture of the Good Shepherd. No word was spoken—no word was needed.

The Good Shepherd walked the way of joy in

carrying out His Father's will. It was His meat and drink—so He said Himself. And an innumerable multitude following Him, not fearing the call of God, have entered into His joy in that same path of obedience.

For those men and women, here, before whom all the paths of life lie open, with all their tempting, beckoning possibilities, there is only one path in which you will find how good and satisfying life may be, and that is the path in which you let God lead you day by day. But let Him lead you this day, lest to-morrow the heavenly vision should not shine so clear.

VIII

The Power of an Affirmation

"*Reckon ye yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.*"—ROM. 6:11.

THIS may seem to some of us to be one of the driest and most mechanical utterances of the peculiar theology of Paul, beginning, as it does, with his favorite word "to impute," "to reckon," that has been used to introduce so artificial an element into the thinking of centuries. It may seem to us to be out of relation with the keenly practical and matter-of-fact thinking of to-day. We want not only reality, but realities that are in touch with the thinking and living of our own generation.

And it is for this reason that I have chosen this text as one to go far with us in life, because it is intensely modern in its thought, throbbing with a reality that you might almost say has become new to our generation. Perhaps it seemed artificial to us in our boyhood—to reckon something that hard-headed sense affirms is not really so—but in this

twentieth century it takes on a new significance, a new pertinence.

The thought is that which seems to be the most vital in Christian Science. It is that, also, which lies behind all the present-day systems of suggestive therapeutics. One might even call its method of operation that of auto-suggestion, and not be far from the fact. Of course, in Paul's thought it has a far wider range than any that merely contemplates physical conditions; for he applies it to our spiritual life. But the principle is the same, and if it is important as it relates to the body, as millions think it is, much more is it important as it applies to the life of the soul. And that is what Paul was concerned about, and that is what we are interested in above all else.

What *is* the principle that is becoming of so intense an interest to our generation, and that Paul here enunciates for those men and women struggling into a Christian life in that moral sink of the Roman world?

It is simply this—that one should proudly assert and affirm a condition of health and completeness, not yet fully realized, but possible and normal to him, and should actually live under the control and stimulus of this assertion until it works itself out into actual realization and achievement. It rests psychologically upon the power of a determined sug-

gestion to affect not only our conscious but our subconscious life, and bring to pass changes that, but for the constant pressure of this confidently asserted idea, would never come to be.

As to the physical side of this principle, I have nothing now to say. It is only upon the moral and spiritual side, as Paul applied it thousands of years ago, that I would urge it especially upon your attention. The ground here has been well explored, and the theories well proved through many centuries, so that we cannot seriously go astray.

It is the secret of noble living, with which we have to do, and none supposes that such a secret is some cheap and easy short-cut to character—it must still call for strength and faith and firmness of decision. The promises of life and death are for him who overcomes, and it is a way of overcoming that our text points out. What is that way?

We all recognize that we are beings of a most complex nature, in whom opposed and utterly incongruous elements are always struggling for the mastery. If we have in us the marks of children of God, we also have the inheritance of the ape and tiger. Selfishness, sensuality, greed, are ever clutching at our nobler selves, to drag us down, to choke and strangle the divine, or at least to contest every step of the way by which we would rise to posses-

sion of our better selves. The animal traits battle with the inheritance of the spirit—God's spirit—in us, as it appeals to us to seize our birthright as men made in the image of God. The appeal to us is to overcome, to resist, to deny, to stifle the clinging, shameful enemies of our baser self, and to walk proudly, yet humbly, as men who will not bow their necks to the slavery of the flesh.

There are two widely different ways of coming up to this ancient battle for a noble life. One may come up to it defeated already because of his apologetic or uncertain attitude; or he may come with the assurance of a victory that in the long run must be his.

Let us use the illustration nearest at hand. There appeared in the papers a little while ago an interview with Elinor Glyn, the novelist. She was speaking of the superb old English marriage vow that has come down to us unchanged through the centuries, and that by its very strength and dignity has often made solemn and worthy the plighted troth that might have been frivolous or careless,—the promise " for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death us do part." Mrs. Glyn was reported as saying, what would meet with a chorus of approval from a certain class all over our country, that this promise was objectionable and useless, be-

cause intrinsically unreasonable, being against nature. Men being what they are, with changing impulses, it was impossible for them to forecast the long future, or to put themselves under an irrevocable bond till death. We must take life as it is, and recognize human weakness, etc., etc.

Now, here is the issue clearly joined. One man comes up to his opening future, and taking his stand upon his rightful strength and honor as a child of God, a man, with his life and its determinations in his own hands, makes a promise until death, unfaltering, unafraid, denying to himself any possibility of aught but fidelity, as an old Greek might have gone out to battle assured of one thing only, that in any case, come life or death, he would not turn his back upon the foe. And in the strength of that superb affirmation of the marriage vow, as tender as it is strong, what an innumerable multitude of men and women have never even imagined the poor dastardly thought of a possible defeat of their pledged honor!

And on the other hand, here again are men and women by the multitude, coming up to this same place of decision, with such an eye to their own weakness, and the probable instability of their own choices, that if they use these words at all they use them with the secret fear that perhaps it will be a vain promise after all. Their defeat is already half

assured by the fact that they would leave every avenue open for retreat, in case their mind should change.

The one man reckons dishonor to his word impossible. The other reckons that it is quite possible; and though he would fight against it, he mentally sees himself already retiring defeated from the contest. One resolutely affirms what he will have, must have, true, and lives under the daily power of that affirmation. The other is afraid to affirm, and lives under the daily influence of the suggestion that there are two courses open to him after all. In each case the work of the suggestion never slumbers; but in one case it is a divine suggestion of strength and honor, and in the other it is one of weakness, of contemptible surrender to the baser element in human life.

We have to-day a wide school of writers, of which perhaps the Italian d'Annunzio is the chief, who more or less openly profess the doctrine that human life, to be complete, must live out all its elements. That we may live, nay, should live, the natural life. And that if the ape and tiger persist in us till this day, we must recognize the necessity of giving them their place in our scheme of living. To do otherwise is to be unnatural; it is to cramp and narrow one's own personality that should have free expression. Sin is a word of pedants and ascetics—of

the strait-laced killers of joy, who envy men the pleasures of a natural existence.

With such a theory of life as that, one is foredoomed to moral overthrow. He may not mean, by it, to give up the fight for character; but the subtle influence of its suggestion, always at work, condoning weakness and excusing indulgence, must needs sap the divine life and strength in man, at its very root. It may lead to a character like that of the younger Dumas, naïvely asserting its utter innocence of wrong-doing and yet marred with lifelong dissipation; but it could never lead to such sternly honorable lives as those of Scott, or Browning, or Gladstone, that in the toughness of their moral fibre can only be the products of a divinely prompted assertion of the will, firm-rooted against all the winds of temptation that can blow.

We need no further illustration of the fact that life is a battle, and that one may so come up to it as to invite defeat, or so as to insure a final victory, when the day is done. We lay the future under compulsion by our predetermined attitude to the fight; we decide the battle in advance, either by the dogged affirmation of our will, or by the wavering uncertainty that is not sure what the issue is to be.

Let us return now to our text, and see the way in which Paul would lay a whole life under bonds—

would determine the issue of the whole struggle from its beginning. He lays down a double assertion regarding one's moral life, facing on the one side toward God, on the other side toward all the gathered forces of destruction that beset the soul. "Reckon yourselves," he says, "to be dead to sin, but alive unto God." Toward sin, count yourselves insensible, unresponsive, unable to be seduced by its allurements; not inviting it to a parley, to see whether you are stronger than it, but denying it and refusing it, as one who is done with it, as a dead man is done with time. You have cut yourself off from it. Live under the daily renewed power of that assertion.

But toward God, reckon yourself alive in every fibre of your being, sensitive and responsive to every stimulus from Him: with every avenue of communication open, with every faculty alert to answer to His will; in deep essential touch with the unfathomed depths of His holiness, and love, and strength; thinking His thoughts after Him by sympathy, loving what He loves, hating what He hates, doing what He wills—a child of the Father. Even here on earth, with the Father hidden in deep darkness, yet daily, consciously, determinedly, holding your life in touch with the Almighty and Holy God. Reckon yourself, so, alive!

But—and we must needs face a chorus of regret-

ful protest—we are not dead to sin! We are not alive to God! Often we are dully insensible to the call of God, and quiveringly sensitive to the appeal of evil. Paul would have us assert what our experience all too hopelessly denies!

Yes, that is so, sometimes, in some degree; our affections are unstable. But is this evident imperfection of character what you wish to be? No, it is not what we wish! Is it what you expect will always be, as your permanent estate? No! may God forbid that, else we should be lost men. Is it what you believe to be your normal life, suitable and proper for you as a man? No! it is neither suitable nor normal, but abnormal and injurious. And, last of all, is it the purpose and design of God, in His great saving work through Jesus Christ, that you should continue so to live, the sport of opposing forces, the occasional prey of the tempter? No! He came to redeem us from all iniquity.

Since, then, this divided allegiance is neither what we wish to be, nor what should be, nor what shall be, then let us rise up, for all our present weakness, and declare our freedom, our true estate, as sons of God, and reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to our Father in Heaven. And though in our assertion of this freedom, Satan may for the time contradict us, and buffet us, and sometimes bring us to our knees, as God lives, he cannot move us,

nor can any pluck us out of our Father's hand. There is an affirmation that is true—one to live and die for! The truth is not yet wholly realized, but it shall be realized, and we now are on the way to such a victory.

We do not need perfect realization in order to assert a truth. This United States was founded as a free country, for free men, in bondage or subjection to no king or over-lord! Tens of thousands died to win its right to such a claim. And the fight was won. And still in 1850 it was a free country, and for free men. Yet there was slavery, to give the bitter lie to such a claim. Did it give the lie? For a little while, yes! But though it took the life-blood of hundreds of thousands to blot out the lie, it could not stand, and long since the essential falsehood of it has been admitted and repented of.

To-day, there are still those in this land who are oppressed and in virtual bondage, economically, to hard masters. Yet this is still a country for the free, and the bondage of these men and women will be broken also. It is our proud confidence that, for all the need of unceasing vigilance to keep our liberties, this land of ours is and shall be increasingly a land of civic freedom. It is its birthright, and no passing menace to its life can long obscure the deep, unshakable determination of the people of the

land that its birthright never shall be sold or even seriously put in peril. A great purpose, and a great faith, take no heed of passing assaults and partial failures, that assail, and threaten, and even seem to deny the truth of that superb assertion.

And if any think these words of Paul are unreal or artificial because they overleap by faith the weakness of these years of earthly struggle, they have misread life. They have mistaken the grandeur of our human nature, made after God's image, that can rise above the sneers and threats and enticements of the flesh, and assert that we are God's, that God has begun His perfect work in us, and that already, here and now, with the enemy on every hand, we count ourselves dead to sin, and alive unto our God. The thrill and power and saving grace of such a divinely prompted affirmation will be with us every day. Not only in our thoughtful moments, but when we sleep, when we are preoccupied with business, when we are dulled with care, our deepest selves, that never slumber, will feed upon that declaration and grow ever stronger for its strength.

This is no dream; it is no theory. It is a fact of experience that has been working itself out in human lives, ever since Paul spoke, or ever since Jesus said to a man or woman, half freed from evil sense, "Go in peace; thy sins are forgiven." Weary years of entanglement in old weaknesses lay before them,

but the assertion and promise of their Saviour overleaped and overlooked the days of conflict to the sure issue of triumphant holiness and joy.

It is impossible to exaggerate the need of such a brave, proud affirmation for those of us who have their life before them. The power of a mean or weak suggestion means the gradual paralysis of our better selves,—their gradual submergence under the tide of the earthliness and pettiness of ordinary living. But if we may truly take our stand as those who have settled for all time the essential question of our attitude to the world, the flesh, and the devil, counting ourselves done with sin and just beginning to live for God, we shall be like men in the saving grip of a great inspiration, who cannot yield, even though, again and again, we are wounded in the struggle. At the university, on the street, in foreign lands, we shall soon be assailed with the doubt whether we are not narrow and peculiar, and whether it is not the part of wisdom to do when in Rome as the Romans do. Under new environments, with new duties and new pleasures, as business life, or perhaps married life, opens to us its new demands upon our constancy, we shall to a certainty be urged to let down our simple standard of straight obedience to God's will. Then it is that we shall thank God anew if we are in the grip of this great affirmation.

It takes a certain heroism to make it and maintain it. But unless we are heroic, we shall never be of those who overcome. In the region of the Caucasus they have a saying, "Heroism is endurance for one moment more." Can we not make a fight, moment by moment, through the years, to be true to this declaration of our true estate? It is a sublime thing to refuse to let go, to refuse to be defeated—a thrilling thing even to witness.

In February of 1901 a German steamer went ashore on a submerged reef, just off one of the roughest parts of the coast of Newfoundland, where the rocks rise in an unbroken precipice for three hundred feet. When the fishermen on the shore first saw her in the morning, her boats were all gone, and only three men were still alive. Two of these were soon carried away. One remained, lashed in the fore-rigging. Presently they saw him loosening his lashings, and letting himself down into the sea. And there he battled his way heroically to the rocky shore. A great wave swept him off. He fought his way back again, only to be swept off a second time, and then a third. They thought then to see him abandon the hopeless agony of resistance to an inevitable fate, and give up the struggle. But slowly and painfully he made his way back to the ship, climbed into the fore-shrouds, and lashed himself as before in the rigging. He would not accept de-

feat. In the morning the fishermen saw him there still, but motionless, frozen in the night. He failed to win his life; but what an indomitable will he had, and what a fight he made!

But, here is the pitiful suggestion. Is it possible that we, making our fight to realize the truth of this great affirmation, may only give an example of such a heroism, failing of its hope at last?

Here is some one to object that, while we have used many brave words in what we have been saying, about the dignity of human nature and the power of the will and the influence of suggestion, yet, after all, such an affirmation is a piece of pure presumption, in which no man is warranted; that only God's mercy could warrant such a claim, or bring to pass such a conclusion of victory. And, indeed, when we look in upon ourselves, we find no such power of self-recovery, of moral renovation, as a proud assertion like this of Paul's involves,—as if what we have been saying were frothy sentiment only, with no sure, sound power of realization.

And just here we come in sight of the last three words of our text—and with them we come in sight also of the glad tidings of the eternal gospel. Paul said, Reckon ye yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. *There* is the reasonable and sufficient ground for such an unwavering assertion on our part,—the fact that God Him-

self is concerned in this matter, is engaged on our behalf, to make the assertion true. The eternal mystery of His love and sacrifice is behind it. It is simply the assurance that we shall presently lay hold of that for which we were laid hold of by Christ Jesus; that till the far end of the day, nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He, the great Elder Brother of our race, would link us with Himself, in a fellowship of sympathy and trust that Paul loved to call union: saying, as Paul did, that he and the young Christians were in Christ Jesus. We may not grasp this thought, we may have different understandings of what Paul meant, but the fact remains—the reality is unshakable—that because of God's hold on us through Jesus Christ He will save us unto the uttermost. He will make good our faith that we are dead unto sin and alive unto Him. It is no presumptuous boast, it is no unsafe assertion, it is what He Himself puts into our hearts, and into our lips, as the sober truth. It is the assurance of inexpressible comfort, that He will one day set us without blemish in His presence.

Let us then, with our eye upon that day and our faith upon this gospel of God, reckon ourselves from this time to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

IX

The Reproach of Christ

"*The reproach of Christ.*"—HEB. 11:26.

IT is an old old phrase, used by men who were made to feel that their message was an insult to the culture of their day. But the sting of it, and the hurt of it, are as truly felt with us as ever in Alexandria or Athens long ago.

The men of those cities were proud, and the story of Jesus Christ was for many reasons humiliating both to their pride and to their learning. We, too, are proud, and keenly anxious to stand well in the great, wise world of letters and science and academic dignity, and there is still the old smarting sense of a certain humiliation in any very close association with so incongruous a figure as that of Jesus Christ. I do not mean the popular idealized or purely intellectual Jesus Christ of an ethical system, but the real Jesus Christ, if there ever was one, of whom we read in the New Testament; the man who demanded of His friends so close and intimate an allegiance that they, too, were compelled to share His shame—

to bear the insult of that personal association, in an unconcealed and deathless loyalty.

Jesus Christ was always a curiously incongruous figure in the polite world either of Judæa or of Rome, with His uncomfortable talk of the deadly sores of society, which polite people cover over, and of the inmost palpitating realities of the soul, which cultured persons still more agree not even to speak of in public. We are quite mistaken if we think that it was only the cross that constituted the reproach of Christ, and that we have passed beyond that, as the cross has become highly respectable and even æsthetically agreeable. There was in the very nature of Jesus Christ and His message something too simple and childlike to fit in with our more sophisticated and formal temper.

A child is so disconcertingly open and frank about all his loves and loyalties. He does not see the reasons for hiding what is in his heart, or constantly dissembling or checking his honest emotions. He is painfully direct and personal, gazing at you with eyes that frankly tell and ask the truth. Where he loves and trusts, his love and trust are apt to be uncalculating and unreserved.

The relations of Jesus Christ with His friends and disciples were very much of this childlike and unsophisticated order, both in what He gave and in what He asked. He stripped away the ordinary

disguises and reserves of social intercourse, and talked with men and women concerning the utmost allegiances of the spirit, as frankly as we discuss the weather. In His very look one could read the innermost depths of His soul, as Peter saw them that night when his Lord turned and looked on him. He gave Himself to His friends absolutely, and unto death. He asked of them the same unqualified surrender, in personal fidelity and love. The essence of His glad tidings, as His best friends knew it, was in this vital, indissoluble union of spirit between the redeemed soul and its redeemer,—a union fused and welded for the ages of the ages by love, that on either side had its unquenchable fires in God.

Now all this is part of the enduring reproach of Christ. It is uncomfortable and unacademic in its methods. It is one thing to sit down and discuss, quite apart from any emotion or personal feeling, the high abstractions of the spiritual life—to talk together as the rabbis and fathers did, quite coolly and intellectually, of the nature of God, and of His ethical demands on human life. Philosophers and wise men have loved such calm and elevating discourse, in all lands and ages. It refines and purifies the spirit even to discuss these great ideals, that can do so much for life.

But who is this that sits down among the doc-

tors, and throws all their calmly ordered wisdom into confusion by the sheer simplicity and intensity of primitive emotions—the quivering fear and hatred of evil and oppression, evils most common and half respectable; the eager, passionate sympathy and pity for the unfortunate victims of these misadjustments in society; the intense, throbbing mother-like love of people, whom He calls His brothers and sisters; the intrusive and bewildering atmosphere of personality that He throws around all His own relations to these people and problems! There is no place for Him among the philosophers. Such passionate devotions and demands, claiming to be the expression of an infinite, eternal energy of divine love, upset all order and reserve in academic discusssion.

And so it was very natural that such a person as Jesus should take a sort of refuge in the simplicity of children, saying—what was heartily laughed at in His time and has amused many by its naïveté ever since—that God had hid these things from the wise and prudent and had revealed them unto babes. "Babes!" the Pharisees would have appreciated that. And Jesus went on further to say that except one became as a little child he would never understand; and that His kingdom was made up of people somehow like children. No wonder that it was mostly people of a certain class that

followed Him; and that none of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed His message.

A few years later, when the greatest of the apostles was spreading mightily the glad tidings concerning Jesus Christ, he was fairly compelled to admit that it was not only offensive to the Jews, but fair foolishness to the Greeks. There was that about Jesus Christ, which Paul could not hide nor dissemble nor escape, which made Him a reproach; so that the apostle rather pathetically called the brotherhood to witness that there were not many wise or mighty or noble among them.

Paul himself was a scholar, and the son of a scholar; and he must have felt keenly the mortification of the situation, that the Christian church had so little backing from the intellectuals of his time. Some here, when in a great modern university, have felt the same way; Paul and they could have sympathized with one another. The real Jesus Christ is an extremely unpopular and difficult figure, both because of His unphilosophic simplicity, and because of His terrific intensity of appeal and demand, as of omnipotence and eternity combined.

It is well for us, at such a time of disappointment, if we can say in the next breath with Paul, that we count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. But it is well for us to remember, till our last day, that this Lord

and Master was one despised and rejected of men, not esteemed in His own time—one from whom men hid their faces. And it will be passing strange if we get through life without being tempted ourselves to regard Him shamefacedly, as one with whom we would not have too much to do in public.

Indeed, this temptation is ever present, even if unperceived, like a strong ocean current that drifts a vessel far out of her course before she knows that aught is wrong. And while it is always polite and proper to refer to the Power that makes for righteousness, and to the common religious elements of the ethnic faiths, and while such remarks are always blandly, even if not enthusiastically, received by any audience, yet to refer directly to this Jesus Christ marks a man at once as a trifle provincial and narrow and peculiar, as a man somehow sequestered from the broad currents of modern thought. As with Gordon in the British army, or Howard in our own, men smile at him tolerantly, but a little derisively, as at a pietistic survival of a past age. Paul knew the sting of that cultured smile even better than the sting of the lash, that marked his body with the reproach of Christ as the other marked his soul. Some of us will carry its scars.

Not all of us may be ready to grant that these things are true. I do not want to assert them dogmatically, as one who has attained to a wiser view-

point than his fellows. We are learners together in these things, trying to be honest and sincere, and plodding onward with a true longing to keep our faces toward the light. It is God's truth we are anxious to come at, and it is not a little shame or humiliation that would make us disloyal to that truth if we knew where it lay. And so I would ask you to reflect on this matter, and see if it be not true that there is a certain reproach of Christ, that tends to make even us instinctively draw away from Him, and to withhold from Him in thought and speech the place that both history and experience declare are His.

What is the place that historic Christianity unquestionably gives to Him? I do not at all mean creedal Christianity, or the doctrines of the church; we go behind those for something more primitive, more essential. We ask of Christianity as a life—as a living force from Jesus' day to ours. We are not now concerned with metaphysics or precise formulæ, but with the vital experience and language of the soul, in its reaction upon the gospel.

There is no manner of doubt, is there, as to the place that Jesus Christ occupied in the life of His apostles and personal friends? We have their letters still, in which their lives are mirrored. And the life they lived was the life of Christ. Paul and Peter and John are alike in this. The element in

which they moved, in which they labored and suffered and rejoiced, was the fellowship of Jesus Christ. In the words of one of them, the life they lived was by faith in the Son of God, who loved them and gave Himself up for them. The keynote of their long, triumphant warfare was this, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Mark closely that there is in all their writings no trace of any possible clashing or confusion between the claims of God and of Jesus Christ. As scrupulous Jews, they were the most intense monotheists that the world has ever known. There was no trace of dualism or tritheism in their thinking. I wish you would sit down and read, say, the first letter of Peter, and see how utterly unconscious he is of any suspicion of this abnormal growth of later times. He simply rejoiced in the fact that God had come to them through Jesus Christ, that the life in Christ was the life with God—and that believing in Christ they could rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

So it was with John. God had given to them eternal life, and this life was in His Son. So they preached a salvation that was brought to them by Christ, and a following life that should be rooted and builded up in Him. The more you read the New Testament the more you will be impressed by the

inseparableness of the new life from a constant and rejoicing fellowship with Him who had brought them to God. Do you feel any difference between this triumphant, joyful assertion of the mastery of their every phase of life by the love of Jesus Christ, and the speech and temper of much of the religious experience and language of our day?

In any case, no man can doubt what was the living heart of apostolic Christianity, nor—and here we go a step further—what was the dynamic centre of the gospel that overthrew the old heathen empire of Rome. You read it in the last words of the martyrs at the stake; you find it written in the endless dark of the Catacombs, on the tombs of the early Christians—the monogram of His name, the picture of the Good Shepherd, the oft-recurring fish (whose Greek letters are the anagram of "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour"); and we see the triumphs of that King and Saviour in every land bordering the midland sea, where the world was centred.

Equally there is no doubt whatsoever as to the place that Jesus Christ occupied in the message that was carried by the missionaries, and endless succession of martyrs, out into the forests and deserts and savage territories that hemmed in the growing Christendom. As John R. Mott has recently said, "The worth of Christianity as a missionary force is measured by what it has of Christ." That has

been conspicuously true, century by century, among all races of men, until this day. Our ethical appeals, and broad generalities, and refined ideals, apart from the central message of Christ Jesus as a Saviour making its appeal straight to the affections of men, are much in demand for home purposes, but they simply do not carry to heathen lands; like a rocket apparatus that works all right on shore, but is helpless in the face of a gale to reach the drowning sailors just beyond the line of breakers.

And there is no doubt what you will hear if you go to any of the halls or chapels where men are trying to save the hopelessly lost. In our up-town churches you will hear endless variations from the apostolic message, but somehow there is only one note to be struck when you are face to face with mortal need, and that is the note of Jesus Christ as a Mighty Friend and Saviour.

It is further true, is it not, that in every time of spiritual revival or refreshing, it is to this New Testament gospel that we return, as to living waters? Probably our own Christian life began in a vivid appreciation of the power of this message, and whenever through the years we are again lifted on a wave of divine quickening, it is to heed anew our Lord's command "Abide in Me," and to find Him again the centre and circumference of our hope and joy. History and experience alike declare Him

as the author and finisher of our faith, and crown Him as the actual Captain of our salvation. It is through our Lord Jesus Christ that God actually giveth us the victory.

And so, you would suppose that every man who bears the name of Christian would be not only loyal, but enthusiastically and joyfully loyal, to Him through whom the love of God has reached him—to Him, once the Man of Sorrows, who is now the supreme sympathizer and Saviour. You would suppose that in every gathering of Christian men, where the things of the spirit are under discussion, all the thought would be colored by this fundamental historic experience of the Christian faith; that all would recognize the truth of their Lord's words, "apart from me ye can do nothing"; that the deep affections of the spirit for Him who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows that He might bring us to God, would continually be revealing themselves, by implication at least, as underlying all.

But how is it? It is a witness to the reproach of Christ that you may go to many churches and to many gatherings of Christian men—even college Young Men's Christian Association gatherings—and scarce hear more than an incidental allusion to Jesus Christ, if even as much as that. You may hear much that is wise and good and uplifting, confessions and exhortations and aspirations, discus-

sion of ideals and duties and obligations, almost everything, in fact, but allusion to the central experience of the soul that colors almost every utterance of those early friends of Jesus, and that is still of necessity our only weapon that is mighty to the casting down of strongholds. Amid endless talk of social renovation, that only is omitted in which lies society's only hope.

We have this same curious condition, written large, in the religious life of England in the first half of the eighteenth century. We can see it better there, in heroic size. It was the most arid and fruitless period of religious life of which we know. It was intensely respectable, scholarly, literary; it was utterly ashamed of enthusiasm and all emotion, and dreaded fanaticism more than the most blighting vice. It argued incessantly and edifyingly with the sceptics of its time. But its most curious note was its reluctance to allow any suggestion of intimate personal relations with God to intrude into its religious experience. It shunned the very name of Christ; it avoided even the name of God, and preferred circumlocutions and generalities when it spoke of Him. A burning word of Paul's thrown into one of their gatherings—"the love of Christ constraineth us"—would have been pitifully incongruous and disconcerting. And it was not until the Wesleys came, and Whitfield, and unveiled again

before men's eyes the imperishable glad tidings of One who would bring men to God by melting their wilful hearts with His own love, and knitting them to Him as men in mortal need cling to their Deliverer, it was not till then that the smothering pall of affectation and unreality lifted from the Christian men and women of England.

We yield ourselves readily to a religion which makes comparatively slight demands; but we shrink back from a leader like Jesus Christ, whose message is so intensely personal, so thrilling with an infinite self-sacrifice and an appeal to love no less uncalculating, and so insistent in bidding us to cleave to Him as a branch cleaves to the parent stem. That is the enduring reproach of Christ, that makes men inclined to hide their faces from Him. He offers too much—He asks what it searches a man's soul to give. He claims the utmost loyalty of love and daily fellowship and dependence.

That is costly. That demand is a perpetual searchlight upon one's honesty and sincerity. Men shrink back from such a religion. There are other religions not so uncompromising. But this is the only religion of Christ. This is the faith that has subdued the world. This is the faith that can give even us the victory, and set us one day without blemish in exceeding joy in the presence of God's glory.

We may think it a hard way. But it is not a hard way. To men who were afraid of this, Jesus said reassuringly, " My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Unnumbered millions have found it the way of joy—of such joy and gladness as life otherwise could not know. And those who meet their Master afresh each morning with greeting of loyalty and gladness, they are the happy ones of earth. Let us not fear, therefore, to go forth unto Him, if necessary, without the camp, bearing His reproach.

X

Life Through Victory

"*I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.*"—JOHN 10:10.

IF only this were true in the sense that men would have it true, what a following Jesus Christ would have. Not the scanty, humble following that He has now, even in Christian lands, of men and women who seek for glory and honor and immortality; but what a rage of popularity there would be for our Lord, if He would promise life on easy terms, such life as the world wants. Not something slowly gained and hardly won, to be reached perhaps through patience and self-mastery during many slow-passing days and years, but just animal life and ease of body under to-day's sun, so that these present days may be sweet and joyous, without the shadow of any struggle or discipline or disappointment. Why, even the poor stone image of the Virgin at Lourdes is crowded by its tens of thousands of enthusiastic suppliants; and if the Good Shepherd had such pity on the sheep as to

give them the life they long for, exuberant days of strength and long untroubled nights of sleep, who would not be one of the sheep of His flock?

Here all about us in this Southwest are great throngs of those who have not the abundance of life, but only a life limited and hampered and threatened. And every day, for conscious, self-pitying hours, they long for more, and look to see if the tide is coming in, or whether possibly the ebb already has begun. Their thought and hunger and prayer, taking precedence of every other prayer and hunger, is for what Jesus said He came to bring—more life. Only, alas! He does not bring it to them. He and they seem to have been thinking of different things. He did not mean, when He said it, what they mean when they pray. They want, what is no great thing, no wonderful possession, only a few years reprieve in this body's dissolution, a little longer efficiency for this machine, that wears out so soon, yet through which we gather to ourselves the joys of living.

But Jesus' thoughts were evidently dwelling on something else; something quite different from this body's pathetic hunger for the tingle and exhilaration of abounding health. He seems to have been quite unconscious of it when he spoke, so preoccupied was He with something far greater and more wonderful and more hardly won. Not indiscrim-

inately lavished on men everywhere, even on the savages and careless children of nature, but something divinely good, infinitely precious and lasting, wrought out like steel upon the anvil—an incorruptible possession of the soul.

How good it must have been, what He was looking at, to make Him willing to disappoint men so! To call Himself the Great Physician, and the Saviour of the world, and yet leave men beset with weaknesses, and sometimes persecuted with unyielding pain. It is true that for a year or more of time, in sundry mud-built villages of an obscure Roman province, He healed the sick—He touched, as it were, for an instant a single drop in the ocean of the world's pain. But in a few months He withdrew Himself again from such activity, and for all these centuries the processes of life and death have gone on undisturbed, with life always fading away, for sinner and saint alike. While yet, at the same time, there has never been a day in these two millenniums in which He has not been offering life—abundant life—to all who will. How are we to understand His promise, that seems to men so wide of the world's wishes and the world's comprehension?

And this is not the only point where the life He came to bring fails to meet the world's importunate hunger. Of what good is life, say many in our

day, if it is to be spent in unbroken drudgery. It is not life, but mere dull gray existence. If I must go to the mill or shop on rising in the morning, and stand there over loom or machine or tool through all the slowly passing hours till evening, and then go home, wearied out, to sleep till the next day's toil; or if I must always trudge after plow or harrow, a peasant laborer, through youth and manhood and even into creeping age, what boon is there in life like this? Yet Jesus hardly seemed to notice whether the man to whom He spoke was master or slave, or poor or rich. He was thinking of something else.

Can you imagine what a following Jesus Christ would have in America if He really gave men what in these days spells life—money? Everywhere men and women are struggling for money; not for the sake of having dollars, chiefly, but because poverty means captivity, in these days. It means limitation of body and mind; it means a life cribbed, cabined, and confined, in comparison with the wide, favored, generous life that wealth would yield. Oh yes! we hunger for means, that we may see life, and enjoy life, and have life! And what does Jesus do for us in this respect? He does not even seem to notice the clamorous hunger that fills men's days. He calmly calls Himself the life-bringer, and yet leaves men bound hand and foot with poverty. Why

does He so pass us by in our desires, compelling us to life-long limitation?

And there are other needs in our life that take first place in our thoughts at times; longings so imperious that they quite crowd to the wall thought of what Jesus had in mind. Desires that are with us last at night and first in the morning. For what is life worth in loneliness, without friends and those who love us? Men and women kill themselves in our cities every day, because of the blank cheerlessness of a life in which their hearts are starving —starving for lack of common human affection.

Abundant life, in any case, means life enriched by the love and fellowship of others. And how many do you think there are, even in this Southern California, whose hearts are a dull ache, either because of loneliness or the fear of it,—for the fear of losing those they love, for the daily sight of fading strength with those whose presence alone makes life a joy. And not losing them alone through illness, but losing them still more hopelessly through their follies and sins and selfishness, that break up homes and effectually break men's hearts—the loss that fathers, and mothers, and wives and husbands know; the loss that is so much worse, so much more cruel, than the peaceful death that only hides from us the love that still is there. What a satire it must seem to some whose lives

are darkened and impoverished by such loneliness as this, to have our Lord speak of giving abundant life, which yet leaves them forlorn, to years that seem stripped of joy.

We are all likely to come to times in our life when we think wistfully every day of what God has denied us, and little of what He gives; when we think much of our self-love, and how indulgent it would be, and little of God's love, and its firm yet tender efforts for our infinite gain, for our spiritual development and redemption. The way of ease is ever in our thoughts; but a way of victory, God's way, we do not consider. And so our whole perspective of life becomes disordered and untrue. We lose sight of the ways of God, and of what life is and of how hardly it is won, and of how it must needs flower out of discipline and struggle, an infinite possession laid hold of in common days of joy and pain. And if we so forget, then peace leaves us, and joy, and our lives grow dull and unthankful, and love withers, and the great expectant hope that can light up even a gray life with the gold of expectation, this also fades out and leaves us in the gloom.

Let us notice in passing two things. First, that Jesus did not, as a matter of fact, despise the joys and comforts of life, or give us a gospel that counts them of no worth. On the contrary, we must see

that His gospel steadily and of necessity tends to raise the level of material good and comfort everywhere it comes. It does this indirectly, and so to speak, incidentally, but it does it. There is less sickness, less early death, less poverty, less disappointment, less loneliness, wherever the kingdom of Christ comes on earth. The level of material comfort rises with the sway of Christ's gospel everywhere, and a first duty of His church is to seek for others the normal level. No fear that we shall lose sight of this, or ever cease to struggle for earthly comforts; the spirit of the ascetic in Christ's church is dead or smitten to its death.

And yet, secondly, notice that this ease of body and comfort of mind, this immunity from life's sorrows and disappointments, is wholly and of necessity indirect and incidental. It is not the primary aim of Christ's gospel; it is not at the heart of the kingdom of God, as realized on earth. He does not promise it, or hold it out as a bait or reward; for the most part He does not even notice it or seem to think of it.

Consider this, which would seem to be perfectly clear in Jesus' teaching: that He did despise and ignore "the ignoble happiness that consists in exemption from life's privations and sorrows."

Why is it so ignoble—the happiness we so hunger for, and so frankly pray for, as frankly and as

innocently as little children? Lord, spare me pain! give me strength and health; spare all those I love from pain and sickness; let me never have the aching heart that dumbly suffers for seeing those I love in trouble; save me from anxiety about money matters, and leave me not to poverty; let me not make a failure for any reason of my business or my work; never set my feet in any valley of humiliation; spare me the loneliness of life, or the creeping shadows of any loss as years multiply; let me out of the world softly.

Do we not, just because we are men and women, who dread trouble as frankly as a child dreads nauseous medicine and rebels against it, do we not thus pray every day for God to be easy with us, as a little frightened child pleads, crying, with the doctor not to touch him lest he hurt.

Oh yes! that is life as we want it—life as we pray for it. A pleasant, smiling, easy, unbroken way of peace, of fulfilled desire, unthwarted, undisappointed, undisciplined; left alone to happiness for fear of hurt. Even though we see how nothing strong and nothing good was ever yet built up in human character without storm and struggle, yet we cannot help but pray, Lord spare me, to-day, and to-morrow!

Jesus was not afraid to face the fact that such happiness is ignoble, unsatisfying, fruitless of any

noble thing; and so, in the end, means the very disappointment and privation that we dread. To some few men and women God allots such a life; and some few of them, recognizing the cloudless skies as a temptation and a most subtle trial and discipline of the soul, mount through it and in spite of it to self-realization and moral strength. But how few they are, and when last did you see one such? And in any case we are not of their number.

No! "life" does not mean guaranteed ease and freedom from care and pain on earth. Jesus did not come to bring that life; He did not speak of it or promise it at all to men. He does not claim to be such a Physician or such a Saviour. He cannot compete with certain religionists of our day who do promise exemption from ills. He fails us there. Let us admit it, nor be astonished at it, nor grieved by it. He will not do this for us. He is a good physician, but such a good physician as will take the little crying child and do for it what must be done to give it back to health and joy. He will not let us suffer irretrievable loss for His weak indulgence of our timid selfish fears.

And though we cannot bear to let go our own desires for our life—a life unclouded, unburdened, for ourselves or others—yet confidently He points our way to something else, that He says is abundant life. It must be life indeed if it is better than what

we want! It must be ineffably better than what we plead for, or He would never suffer us to go through what perhaps we have to go through in finding it. Yet we see it so imperfectly. It seems so far away! It does not beckon and allure, as merriment does, or the world at the spring. And yet, unless Jesus is a mocker, it must be, and it must be intensely real, and marvellously satisfying, or He would never have given Himself for the sheep that they might find it.

What, then, is this life? "Oh yes!" some one says, "it is the future life—heaven's. Heaven's joys against earth's sorrows. The old story; if we be patient here, we shall have abundant reward hereafter. So we must try to live the other-worldly life, in sight of the next world, being willing to go without here for the sake of what shall come to us in the far future."

We all feel that there is something wrong about this; something artificial and, so to speak, unnatural. Surely the goodness of God and the richness of His dealings with His children ought to begin here and now, not to be broken or essentially changed by death.

And so, in fact, Jesus spoke and thought of the life He came to bring. It was for the men and women who were about Him when He spoke, to win

and to enjoy in Capernaum, say, or in Gadara, just as He was sharing it then and there in their midst. No fear but that anticipation was left. It was all only a foretaste, a beginning; the best was yet to come. But it was the beginning of the great complete blessed life that He came to bring. And as such, it was better, by an infinite, eternal distance, than the pleasant, quick-passing sunshine of earthly ease for which we pray. Jesus then does not offer heaven's life in place of that we long for; He came to bring us life for to-day; a life of strength and courage and ever-growing worth.

And so we ask again, what is the life that God offers men, through Jesus Christ? What can His Father's love provide for us that is better than what all the world's a-seeking?

We must have reality in the answer to this question, or it is a mockery of our ignorance, however pious it may sound. And is not the answer found somewhere here,—that any life, infinitely worth seeking, must in the nature of the case be bound up with God, must lie in some sort of genuine fellowship with Him, and with His permanence and worth? It cannot be in any of these quick-passing material conditions, amid which we are just now spending our few numbered days of earthly existence. Thus, e.g., it cannot lie in our having, say,

five thousand more days than most men get of comfortable eating and sleeping beneath these skies. We are not cattle, and our ambitions do not rest in being allowed to browse contentedly in green pastures without end.

All life of the spirit flows from God—He is the life. And all the satisfying good of life, and all the joy of it, and all its abiding energy and fruitfulness, are in Him. He is the source and the sum of all that we call life, forever and forever. Skies and suns will wear out and be forgotten, like our pains and pleasures of yesterday, but God remains the source and spring of life throughout eternity. And this is what His love plans for us—so Jesus taught—that we should share His life; that we should enter into fellowship with Him as His children, our sin cleansed and forgiven, and our hearts made responsive to His thought and to His love. That would be life worth longing for! It would satisfy the irrepressible hunger of our souls.

But think what it would mean! And what an immeasurable victory it implies—to share God's life. What is that life like? It is not mere blessedness. It is love! Not self-love, but redeeming love; love energizing for others; love bearing such a burden for men in trouble as Jesus revealed in His life and death. But for such men as we, how much does this mean of purification and development and re-

demption! It is not being left alone to our love of ease and comfort that is going to equip us for that divine future! Our natural indolence, and fear of hardness, and love of pleasure, and selfishness, and unresponsiveness to the high calls of God, these are not the qualities that lead up to such life as we shall need for the "ages of immortal service" that lie before us.

If we could choose our own way, how ever should we grow into those divine qualities of strength and steadfastness and ministering helpfulness that are only won out of the battle? The kind of life we most often long for, would it brace our souls to fortitude? Should we win from it the bravery of soul, the patience, the trustfulness toward God, the sympathy for men, the obedience and love, that are to be found unto praise and honor and glory when the long new day of service shall begin?

Oh no! Who of us has wisdom and courage to choose the life that should yield us such fruits of victory as these! Only God can do that for us. And in the words of Jesus Christ, He holds out to us this promise that He will do it—the promise of abundant life. Surely it is a promise out of His tender love. It is the best that He can do for us; and how costly it is to God Himself we read in the story of the Man of Sorrows. Do we wish that He should fulfil for us that promise? Will we have

a life that grows through victory, even through burden-bearing for others, rather than through comfortable ease? It will lead us in strange ways! It may take us whither we would not choose to go. It may teach us to be brave, when we would rather feel no need of courage. It may make us servants of others, when we would rather men should wait on us. It may hold us helplessly idle for months and years, when we are all eager for life's most strenuous effort.

But all along it will be a way of life, because the love of God is leading us. All along it will be a way of peace and hope and divine cheer, because God does not let His servants walk in darkness, but gives them as they go the light of life. If we are His and are in His hands and know we are in His hands, and trustfully let Him have His way with us, surely that is the sweetest and deepest joy in life. The promised "abundant life" is beginning to have its way with us then, and our Lord and Saviour is saving our life from its weakness and its fears, for His great uses yet to come.

Very likely there will be no visible glory about it, or anything in sight for men to envy us. They may even say of such a one, "Poor fellow! his is a hard case." But the divine, invincible life is in his soul, waiting to unfold its wings. If there is any good future for God, there is that much of good

future for this man! If there is any abundance and exultance of life in God, there is that much life for this man!

That is where the comfort of Christ's promise is, and its glory of majesty. That is why He laid down His life for the sheep. Not to give them money, or ease, or fifty years of health and pleasure, but, by breaking sin, to join their life to God's blessedness and ministering love forever. And so we lift up our heads, even it may be in disappointment, and say to one another,

"Be strong!
We are not here to play, to dream, to drift;
We have hard work to do, and loads to lift;
Shun not the battle, face it!
'Tis God's gift.
Be strong
It matters not how deep intrenched the wrong,
How hard the battle goes, the day how long,
Faint not, fight on,
To-morrow comes the song!"

XI

God First

"*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.*"—1 JOHN 2: 15-17.

THESE words have fallen harsh and chill on many a youthful heart, quick with the joy of life. In days past, they must have been a very sentence of death on thousands of conscientious souls, shutting them up forever behind cloister and monastery walls, from all the sweetest relationships of life. I well remember their leaden weight upon my spirit in certain moods, in the days when every leisure month was spent in the ever fresh exhilaration of travel on the sea or among the mountains,—when the fascination of God's beautiful world, both of nature and of man, was at its height. How we love it!

"The light of setting suns,
The round ocean and the living air,

And the blue sky, . . . the meadows and the woods
And mountains, and all that we behold
From this green earth, of all the mighty world
Of eye or ear."

And dull and heavy on our soul falls the grim refusal, "Love not the world!"

Even if we say that these words were not meant as an absolute prohibition of the love of the sunny, outward world of sense, but are only meant to demand the first place for God, yet there have been times with most of us when the claims of a future, or even a spiritual, world have been cold and ghostly by comparison with the thrilling invitation and seduction of this pleasure-garnished visible and outward home of the body.

How are we to think of these words most truly? How far can we honestly enter into their spirit and make the choice that they would have us make: not many years hence, when the blood has cooled and the senses no longer are imperious and domineering, but now, when the call of the great beckoning world is like the call of the woods in spring. We take a few moments to think out these things, and to declare to ourselves where we stand—whether with this old, old man who lived under the shadow of the cross, or with more modern apostles, like Omar Khayyam, who bid us drink deep from the offered cup.

Half our task is to become sure what John meant by the world, that he saw already seduced and doomed, lying in the evil one. It is so easy to juggle with the phrases of the Bible; to use its words to oppose and overthrow its prevailing principles. And many foolish and revolting teachings have been built up on these words, wrongly understood. It does not mean the broad, fair, sunlit world of earth and sea and sky, that is so wonderful, so glorious, so appealing to him whose senses are trained and quick to see and understand. The Greek word is cosmos—not the word used for the habitable earth, but the famous word that stands for the order and beauty of the universe. John uses it continually, in his gospel and in his letters. And it is evident that he sometimes uses it in anything but an evil sense, as when he says that the world was made by God, or that God loved the Son before the world's foundation.

There is nothing more sure than that this outward home of our earthly body is God's world and that God pronounced it very good. He is its Creator; and as He made man in His own image, so He made the world for man's brief home, adapted to meet and gratify the senses and cravings and appetites that also are from Him.

There would be something wrong with the man who did not feel in every fibre of his being the al-

lurements and the joys of his environment. If it is right and fitting to feel the delight of good food when one is keen with hunger, or of cold water when one's throat is parched with thirst, or of sleep when one's body aches with fatigue, so it is a part of God's thought that we should rejoice in the answer of His creation to all the senses and capacities with which we are endowed, from the commonest universal cravings, that we share with the savages, up to these highest and keenest joys that vibrate in response to noble music, or art, or the ineffable glories of flaming heavens at sunset. Jesus, we may be sure, was keenly sensitive to the appeal of nature, as it called to Him from those Galilean hills, nor can we imagine Him sympathizing with those who would look sourly out upon Nature's smiling face, or who would even try to hold their heart from too keen a response to her attractions.

A man may, of course, make a curse of almost any good thing by intemperance or abuse; but I think we need have no fear of any reproach from Jesus if we love the world His Father made. He is the blessed and happy God, the God of joy; and this world, in all its joy-creating richness, is the expression of His thought. We may rejoice and be glad in it, all the more keenly because we are His children.

Again " the world " is used of the world of men;

neither evil nor good, but simply meaning the human race, the children of the Father. As John himself said, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son." The greatest followers of Jesus have been the greatest lovers of this world, loving it with a true passion—like Francis Xavier and St. Francis of Assisi, and John Wesley and Lord Shaftesbury and Colonel and Mrs. Booth of the Salvation Army. As John himself says, "He that loveth"—in this sense—"is born of God and knoweth God." So we need have no fear that we may go wrong through a passion for humanity.

Thus we come to the meaning of the word as John used it. We see at once that it refers to nothing outward, external, visible, as a separate entity, like the earth or the world of men. It is intensely ethical. It gathers up the whole of creation that is in opposition to its Creator's will, the children of disobedience, the present evil world, of which Satan is said to be the prince and ruler. Indeed, John goes on to make clear how distinct and limited is his meaning when he gathers up all that is in the world under three classes of evil desire—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life. It covers all that is taken as an end in itself without God—all even that might otherwise be good, but that becomes a snare and illusion because it is regarded as sufficient and satisfying of

itself and so comes to take the place of God; all with which men try to fill their hearts to the exclusion of Him who should have first place.

But of course it is the human element of which John is thinking—all the worldly aims and ambitions and motives, unlike God's, that are colored by selfishness and pride, and all the achievements that are built on them, that form no part of the kingdom that endures. No doubt he would have included all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, that the father of lies once said were his to give to whom he would. The world-rulers of whom John knew were sensual and cruel men, and the great overshadowing empire of Rome was like a very Anti-Christ, now that its head had arrogated to himself divine honors in place of God. But even where worldly dominion was not in the hands of wicked men, the very ideals of this world, as Jesus pointed out, were rooted in the desire for lordly authority, instead of in the ministering love that was the foundation of His kingdom. And as a matter of fact, the age-long preference of the creature to the creator, of the things seen to the things unseen, had resulted in making the prevailing spirit of society one at active enmity with God and with His ways: one also that was degrading to the divine in man, defiling to the soul; so that James begged men to keep themselves unspotted from the world,

as though it stained and contaminated by its very touch.

Not only is this world all interwoven and held together by undisciplined desire, but it is the world that passeth away. In comparison with the world of obedience to God's will, that abideth forever, it is all Maya—illusion—its pomp and glory and wisdom and power all are drifting away like passing clouds that dim the sun, and that will presently drift past and disappear while the sun shines on. For these reasons, said John, because this world is drifting, unsubstantial, doomed to be forgotten, and because the love of it straightway displaces the love of the Father and so corrupts the spirit with misplaced desire, for this cause, he says, "Love not the world."

You remember there was once a man living a sturdily honorable and courageous life as the friend and associate of Paul. His name was Demas; of whom we only know that he forsook that honorable life, and his aged friend, having "loved this present world." That is the epitaph upon his character. And what an innumerable procession of men and women have followed after him since that day, losing their divine birthright, for no other reason than that they loved the present world—the world that does without God.

Take a few moments to consider how barren an

ambition it is to build up the wealth or glory of the world as an end in itself, or to link one's life with it. How miserable a reward it gives to him who lives for it but is not rich toward God. We do not refer now to what is openly vicious or evil. But many a man of honest purpose has slowly come to give his life to this world alone, in order to increase its knowledge, to add to its wealth, or to enlarge its power over nature. And when he has done all, what has he done, if he has wrought without thought of God?

The achievements that make up our twentieth century civilization, of which we are so overwhelmingly proud, are not necessarily worth living and dying for. They are not all gain. As Dean McCormack has said, we are not better off than our fathers because we can talk by telephone across a space that they could only span by letter in weeks of travel. The question of gain or loss is decided by what we say into that telephone—whether it be nobler and wiser and worthier than what our fathers might have said. The great discoveries may easily be mere instruments of our decay.

Consider the English race! For centuries they have been among the leaders of Western civilization. They have been the inheritors and users of all the discoveries and inventions of modern times. All the labor-saving machinery, the devices and ap-

pliances for increasing wealth and multiplying production, the means of adding to life's security and comfort and luxury, have been the possessions of the English people; and what science and industry and invention can do for a nation in these last days has been done for her. Her civilization is the product of these vast agencies for enriching life. And how far is the result divinely good? How far is it worth these centuries of striving by unknown multitudes of workers?

We need not dwell upon the fact that a large share of all this product of modern civilization is devoted year by year to improving ways and means for slaughtering men in case of war; which surely is not of the Father, but of the world. But we should dwell long and earnestly upon the fact that as the crown of all this long struggle of civilization, in London, the capital city of the world, nearly a quarter of its people are said to be more miserably fed and housed than some savage races that still live like their ancestors of the stone age. Eight million people in England have but the narrowest margin between themselves and starvation. One in five of all the adults of London die either in the workhouse, the hospital, or the asylum, a public charge, going sullenly from a life that has been of a leaden gray, so stripped was it of wholesome joy. And conditions similar to these

are steadily making their way into all the greater cities of the world, on both sides of the Atlantic.

If the inventions and discoveries and all the scientific progress of our day is steadily to eventuate in increasing the luxury of the fortunate, while it grinds the unfortunate to powder, who could be satisfied with even the career of the greatest inventor of our day? And such I believe is its inevitable end, so far as it has its inspiration not in God but in the glory of the world. It is only the presence among us of diviner motives and diviner ambitions that has kept our knowledge and our wealth from making of civilization a thing selfish and satanically cruel. The world that John saw lying in the wicked one is all about us, and the pride and power of the twentieth century are largely at its service.

It is for the men who put God first to stand like a rock for the kingdom of Christ among men. For that kingdom of actual brotherly love does not make headway against the world save by stern, indomitable effort and self-denial, that are rooted in prayer and in fellowship with God. It is not enough to say that we are doing our share by adding to the world's knowledge or the world's comfort or the world's wealth. Who knows whether the added knowledge and wealth and comfort will bring men nearer God or hide Him further from their sight? Nay! if through advancing science the very last

secret has been wrung from nature, the very last specimen found and classified, and the comfort and luxury of the dominant classes of society increased a hundredfold, what should keep our civilization from being more material, more sensual, and more selfish than it is to-day? If our life-work is to go simply to increasing the sum of human achievements that must ultimately drift away because in them is nothing of timeless value, then we are building a life-work upon the sands. It is piteously easy, with the world's glamour fairly dazzling in our eyes, to love the glory that is of men more than the glory that is of God. In the words of Jesus, " The glory that cometh from the only God " we seek not, because the world has our hearts. But when we have won the worldly glory, nay, when we have fairly captured the world, what shall it profit us in the long, long day that is to come? It is a barren ambition and it carries a cheap reward simply to build up the wealth or glory of civilization, if that is all—if the love of the Father is not behind it, to link our work with His and bind us to Himself in its doing.

So we come back to this grim prohibition with which we started and ask again, What does it mean?

It does not mean that we should not rejoice in all the good things of the world to which our bodies have been framed to answer. Rather are we to

use the good things of the world as not abusing them. Would that our higher senses were even trained to a keener sensitiveness, so that we might respond more deeply to the beauties and pleasures that are our proper joy.

Again it does not mean that we should flee from the evil world because we recognize its dangers for the soul. It does not bid us do as thousands of those who first read these words thought it bade them do—seek out some quiet place of refuge where the waves of temptation should not beat so fiercely. They streamed out into the deserts and mountains, living in caves as hermits, where the vainglory of life should be far away and where nothing should appear to tempt the eye. What they found there God only knows! But they did not find His will—they who thus fled away from the seducing world. Their place was, like a true soldier's, at the heart of the danger.

In a few years, many of us who are here will find ourselves where the waves of this threefold evil desire beat upon us as the sea beats upon a harbor wall. Every day will make us realize anew that we are in the world against which John warned us. That is all right. Let us not think it strange, or an impossible situation for a Christian. It is what our Lord looked forward to for His disciples. "As the Father sent me into the world, even so

have I sent you into the world." It was the right place for them, even though in the world they should have tribulation. To be sure, it was an alien atmosphere and environment, but it was the element in which they were to do their work and win their souls. They were as safe amid its uproar of Vanity Fair as they could be in the peace of heaven, if only they went in His spirit and with His companionship.

There is something thrilling in the sight of a great steamer putting out to sea on schedule time when a heavy storm is blowing. It may be a howling mid-winter blizzard in New York. The cold is piercing, the wind roars overhead, and one thinks how the ocean, but a few miles away, must be a fury of raging waters, lashed by such a gale. But at twelve o'clock the great ocean liner, lying comfortably and safely at her dock, slips out into the stream, with all her precious lives on board, and in a few hours, swept by the spray from quivering stem to stern, she is battling with the North Atlantic in its most deadly mood. Her designers built her for that very thing, she is under orders to carry the mails on that very day, and she carries them unafraid, because, however she may be battered by the waves, her plates are firm and the waves can find no point of entrance.

So our Lord sends His disciples out into the world, unafraid, where the lust of the flesh and the lust

of the eye and the vainglory of life are on every side assailing. He sends them there not idly, but on a great commission, as He came Himself, not to judge the world, but to save the world. Not to be separated from the love of the Father, but to carry that love with them in their hearts, and in the strength of it to plant His kingdom ever more and more firmly here on earth among the men who would be forgetting Him.

We see then that this prohibition is not meant to rob our lives of love or joy, to make them gray or cold, but to fill them with the love which enriches every love, the love of the Father, and to cheer them with that joy which outlasts every joy, the joy of our Lord.

It is not meant to make this life grudging, but to make it abundant, as God can. And holding us steadfastly in the midst of alien elements on every side, it gives us our share in hastening that day when even the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and the chorus shall go up "Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

XII

Simon of Cyrene

"*On him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.*"—LUKE 23:26.

THAT was Simon of Cyrene! Coming quietly into the city on a feast day, to be saluted by this tragedy and insult.

It was the most astounding and dramatic moment of his life. He was not an African, or a peasant from the fields, as some have supposed, but a respectable Jew. Like Paul he was a citizen of no mean city, only in his case the city was Cyrene, in Libya, about halfway between Carthage and Alexandria. It was a famous old Greek town, beautiful, prosperous, and cultured. For hundreds of years a large part of its population had been Jewish, the descendants of old exiles who had been sent there in crowds as far back as the reign of Manasseh. They were so numerous and influential that they had their own synagogue in Jerusalem. And this Simon was one of them, who had come up to the feast.

On that bright April day he was coming into the city, well-dressed, respectable, busy with his own thoughts. And suddenly, to his disgust, as he turned into the gate, he was encountered by the noisy rabble that ever follows a party of criminals to the execution ground. There, before his eyes, were the three poor blood-stained creatures going to their death. One of the three, weak from the torture of the scourging, was fainting beneath the load of the cross he bore, and the procession for a moment was standing still. The party was in a hurry. The day had worn on, the next day was the Sabbath, and there was need of haste if the wretched business was to be completed before sundown. So the soldiers would have goaded Jesus on, as still they do in like case, so long as His strength could respond to pain. But the end came while Simon was looking at Him, when even the soldiers saw that He must have help if the execution were not to be delayed.

What fixed their attention on Simon, out of all the crowd, we do not know. He was a stranger and without friends, to be sure; but that was no reason why they should put on him this loathsome insult of having to bear a criminal's cross through crowded streets to the execution ground. Possibly he had known Jesus, and some malignant voice in the mob proclaimed the fact, and pointed him out as a friend. More likely he had heard of Him as a good man;

and coming thus face to face with Him, in mortal distress, tortured, helpless, brought to bay among His enemies, had uttered some generous words of sympathy or indignation that angered the soldiers and made them think of this scurvy retort.

If he pitied the man so much, under His load, let him bear it himself and so relieve the situation. And at the suggestion they dragged him out of the crowd of bystanders and, silencing his angry protests, compelled him to pick up the cross or beam—for probably it was but a single timber—and join the pitiful group within the circle of the guard. And there was he, Simon, an honorable citizen of Cyrene, actually forced along the street like an outcast, bearing the stained cross of a condemned criminal. And the crowd, ever quick to turn against one in a predicament, was following him with jeers and insults, as though he really were what his shameful position seemed for the moment to declare him—a fellow-victim. The shame of it must have entered his very soul; because "on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus."

But do you think that the brutal injustice and searing humiliation were all that fixed his attention in those moments before Calvary was reached? We know they were not. Even if we pay no attention to tradition, we know that his two sons, Alexander and Rufus, were well-known Christians of a later

time, and it is at least probable that his wife is mentioned as one who had showed hospitality to Paul. Something came over his life that made his family disciples of that same crucified Jesus.

We can partly guess what it was. He was bearing the cross after Jesus—for Him. Do you suppose Jesus ever accepted even a cup of cold water, or a trifling kindness from a little child, without such heartfelt thanks as stayed by the giver? And now when He was at the worst, in mortal need, and with no friend by to help—with no Peter to help Him with the cross, or John, or faithful Thomas to give Him even a shoulder to lean upon—and this stranger was forced to come to His help and share His shame, do you think Jesus was unmoved or ungrateful?

As they two walked together, and as the dread moment came when Simon's share ended and he laid down the cross to leave it and go back to his peaceful life, leaving the Saviour with it to finish there His work of love, we may be sure that something, never to be forgotten, passed between them —between Jesus Christ and the man who, for a few moments, had carried His cross. It may have been words, it may have been only a look, or the pressure of a hand: but I believe it did its work—gave him, perhaps even at that moment, a glimpse of the truth that no higher privilege or joy could come into the

life of a human soul on earth than to help bear the heavy burden of that Master, to carry ever so little of the weight of that shameful cross.

At first, Simon must needs have had only a sense of injustice and of grievance. He had done nothing to deserve so disgraceful a burden. What propriety or fitness or purpose was there in making him shoulder, even for a moment, that cross of shame! But then, had Jesus deserved it? Was there any reason or justice in His bearing it or being lifted up upon it from the earth? If Jesus carried it patiently to the end, unprotesting, trustful of God, might not he, Simon, be called to a share in the same faith and patience?

So he would see, what may we see to-day, that God's thought in putting a cross on men is not our thought. He has in it a higher principle than that of giving us our deserts. Its weight is not proportioned to our demerit. He does not even point out the precise fitness or propriety or purpose in our bearing it. He has a purpose in it, be sure! Jesus knew what it was for Him, Simon did not. But for both Simon and Jesus that shameful, heavy burden was their privilege, their high honor, their sacred service. Jesus bore it for the world's joy—for you and me! Joy was set before Him, at the far end of the way of the cross; so He despised the shame. And Simon—he bore it for the Master;

and the very fact that he " bore it after Jesus " was the saving of himself and of his household.

There was no mistake about it then, after all, outrage as it was. No injustice, no unreason, no accidental or capricious fortune. The crowd might have jeered itself hoarse at the ridiculous incongruity of it, and his friends might have condoled with him at the cruel wrong of it, but in the end he would know that there was neither joke, nor wrong, nor blunder there, but the plan of God to give him a blessed share in his Saviour's labor of love.

Consider now several of the common principles of life that are illustrated by this incident. First, there are the difficulties and unkindnesses of our lot in general! Sometimes these troubles that we have come to, these hardnesses of our life that we call crosses, seem as cruel and uncalled-for as did that outrage upon Simon. Mysterious, we call them respectfully. It is not so much that they are painful, or difficult to bear; we could muster the requisite courage and strength for that, if only we could see any purpose in them, could see what they were leading to. But they appear mere useless drags on our life, mere senseless, stunning blows upon our fortune. Accidents—capricious, inopportune; perhaps the results of others' blundering or folly. Or our cross is an obvious misfit, a misadjustment to our strength and temper. Another's we could bear more

easily, we could see some reason or discipline in it; but ours is a dead weight, unrelieved by any visible use or reason; we bear it fretfully, in the dark.

Never did a man have so mockingly capricious a lot to bear as Simon. It was sheer ill luck that he had blundered into it. If he had been a moment later or earlier, if the soldiers had not had the ill fortune to turn on him, he would have escaped. There was no sense or fitness in laying that disgrace on him. If he had been an apostle, or a disciple, or a relative, or if he were a beggar or a criminal, there would have been at least some show of sense in it. But as it was, he was the mere sport of circumstance!

So he must have thought at the time. But do you suppose he thought that, when his career was done? On the contrary, those brutal soldiers had been, little as they knew it, the means by which God's grace had entered his life.

God does not deal with His children by accidents. He does not blunder with the sorrows He allows in their life any more than with His gifts of grace. He chooses strange ways to lay crosses upon us, ways that have all the marks of sheer senseless unreason, as with Simon, ways that we can demonstrate at the time to have nothing divine or loving in them. But in the end, I believe we shall see that they were fitted to do His work for us if we would

let them; fit, if we would carry them patiently, to be, like that cross of Jesus, a messenger of mercy. Let us wait till we see the end before we think we have excuse to be bitter, yes, or even impatient, before God.

This only brings us to our main theme. Nearly every one of us, no doubt, would like to follow Jesus if we could choose the time and place and manner of following. But you know the fact. That Jesus Christ will not have any soul of man as His follower on terms like these. He leaves us in no doubt, He is explicit enough to satisfy the most doubtful; He gives us plain terms, of dignity and honor, demanding courage that true men answer to. He said, "If any man would come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me."

He does not want to discourage us; it is not that He does not want followers. He never longed for them more than at the moment when He spoke these words. He only wants us to know the truth, that the Christian life is neither a jest, nor a merry-making, nor a parade through aisles of continuous applause. But that, beginning in earnestness and self-denial, it carries a cross to the very end, with need of patience and humility and exertion all the way. There are plenty of paths to follow, to-day and to-morrow, that lie just ready to our feet, how indefinitely easier to tread; they demand no bravery

or courage, no honor or unflinching determination; we can change our mind in them as often as we choose, and be as indolent and self-indulgent as the fancy of any fool could dictate. And we shall not lack either leaders or good company! But Jesus Christ! There is no way of disguising the fact that He walked in a way of temptation, where He lived His life and won His victory only with strong crying and tears. And for others than Himself, whose troubles He need not have added to His own, He bore a cross—the cross made up of the sin and sorrow and shame of men and women who did not care for Him, and who little thanked Him for His sacrifice.

And what is the prospect for one of us, who honestly and doggedly will choose and follow such a leader? Surely he, too, will have to fight his fight; to endure hardness; fighting his own battles that are hard enough, and in addition, by the mercy of God, fighting some battles for his fellows—carrying a cross for them.

You know that there are multitudes of men today who would dodge this necessity. Who would gladly let Jesus Christ, whom they call Lord and Master, do all the cross-bearing and bear the whole weight of the burden, making for them an easy way to heaven, with no disconcerting call to courage and self-denial. They would gladly follow Christ on

terms like these, well back among the crowd, where there should be no danger of their being associated with the Saviour, or involved in His grinding burdens, until all the cross-bearing was done, all the price paid, and only the pleasant rewards of His sacrifice to reap.

Some of us, in some moods, would know what it is, I am sure, practically to ask the Lord to save us the trouble of being a man. And thank God! to all such comes the kind and pitiful, but eternally unrelenting answer, No! He will have us as true men, or He will not have us. If we are still looking around to see if any in the watching crowd would laugh at us, or if any of our comfortable independence would be intruded on, then He has still to wait. He would have us choose the hard way of honor, if it be a hard way, and come out fairly in the open as with Him. Simon was pushed out clear into the middle of the street where Jesus stood, and where the bystanders on either side could point at him to their heart's content. And it is good for a man to have, like iron in his blood, like new life pulsing in his veins, the sense that he and his Master stand together, identified by the crowd, whether they cheer or jeer at two such companions on such an errand. Mind you, the Lord will be right true to you His companion day by day, past all days, forever. God help us to stand

with Him to-day, that when the heavens and the earth are removed He still may stand with us, immovable and faithful to His servant.

One step more, see the privilege and the honor of the task and the opportunity laid upon us. Little as Simon knew what he was doing, he came to the help of Jesus Christ; he bore a part of the weight of the Saviour's cross. To be sure, he was a poor sinner, himself; no infinite and sinless one who could share in that perfect atoning sacrifice for the world's sin. And yet, he helped the Son of Man to bear His burden; some of the weight and the shame and the burden of that bitter work fell on him, Simon of Cyrene. Only a little—an inconsiderable trifle—for a moment or two. And yet he helped. He who must needs himself be saved by his Lord's mercy, mercifully ministered to his Lord.

Let us not lose any of the plain simplicity of God's message to our souls at this point, by supposing that here we begin to diverge into mere sentiment, or unpractical mysticism. For it is only sober truth, and no devout exaggeration, to say that men and women still are called to come up to the help of their Master; to share His burden for the world; to bear the cross on His behalf. Paul, you remember, uses those very words: "To you it hath been granted not only to believe on him but also to

suffer in his behalf." He spoke of himself as "filling up what was behind of the sufferings of Christ."

If you and I had lived long enough ago, we might have used our money or our hands actually to minister to the personal needs of Jesus on earth. Should we count that a privilege? But now, if a man truly loves and honors Him, what is there he can do? And instantly we hear Jesus answer, "Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep." "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

The sheep of His flock are scattered abroad upon the mountain sides until this day, distressed and scattered. He gave His life that mercy and joy might reach them; but neither that joy or mercy have reached them yet, and they will not, save as some one comes up to His help and bears a part of His burden after Him, on behalf of the lost sheep. The burden-bearing is not over yet.

How do you think Jesus Christ looks out on the colossal sorrows and cruelties of the heathen world? The crying in pain of tens of thousands of little girls with bound feet, the growing up of millions of children in such an atmosphere of killing vice that before they are men and women they are stained through and through with sin; the heart-breaking loneliness and bitterness of the multitudes

of women in Asia, from whose ranks the crowded, never-ending procession of suicides is recruited day by day? The groans of bleeding Africa have come up before God these many centuries, though no man knew of those awful miseries palpitating there in the dark, felt only by God and by the victims.

The only hands that have ever turned back the great tides of human sorrow have been the hands that bore the print of the nails. And still it is true that hands like His, with the mark of sacrifice upon them, are the only hands that will reach to such a work as this. Hands with itching palms, hungry for the dollar, will never do it—only love will share this work with the Master. And such hands are stretched out to-day by the thousand, ready to seize the cross.

Why, Africa, alone, within a century, has its roll of unknown hundreds of men and women who have come up to the help of their Master. You might be able, if you relished such a search, to find among them here and there a man who went to the work with meaner motives. But practically every one of that great company stepped out after his Lord into the street called Via Dolorosa, with noblest motives of divine love. When young Mackay went out to Uganda, the youngest but one of a party of eight stalwart Englishmen, he said to an audience before he left: " Within six months you will probably hear

that one of us is dead. When the news comes, do not be cast down, but send some one immediately to take the vacant place." Within three years he was the only one left in Africa of that original band. And this is but typical of all the pioneering work of Christ's kingdom in the Dark Continent. Life has been poured out there like water, as was the life of Jesus. And it has been a willing offering of joy—of great cost, but worth the price.

But they who have gone out into all the world after the lost sheep are not the only ones called to bear a part of the Lord's burden. Are there no marks of sacrifice on your life and mine? In all our Lord's cross-bearing for this present living generation is there no part of the burden on our shoulders? If not, if we are care-free, left unhampered even by our own burdens and our own worries, then we may count ourselves lucky! But are we lucky? Rather do we know that we are losing the gladdest and most sacred privilege of life, in that none of our Lord's burden for the lost sheep rests on us. The Laymen's Missionary Movement is an effort to bring this fact home to the men of the American churches. Not that they should give to missions—respectably and perfunctorily—but that they should come up under the burden of a great work of redeeming love, and lift at it, for love of their own Master.

XIII

The Sinlessness of Jesus

IT is sometimes said that the church, long after Jesus' death, was led to put the doctrine of His divinity in its creeds, simply to cover a few verses in the later New Testament that demanded it for Him. But on any study of Jesus' character we see how it is not a few proof texts that lie behind this historic belief of the church, but the whole marvellous portrait of the man. You may subtract this verse and that, but so long as the story of the gospels remains, to let us know what manner of man He was who once walked in Galilee, the world will see the beauty of the eternal holiness revealed in Him, and in Him will find, as He said, the very Way to God.

Under the pressure of a dogmatic denial of all that seems to bring the supernatural too near, many critics of our time feel the need of denying the sinlessness of the man of Nazareth, using for the most part a single text of the New Testament to overthrow its incontestable trend and teaching from first

to last. They say little of this denial; they break the disagreeable statement to us as gently as they can, speaking of the times when Jesus' will passed through stages of disobedience to the divine leading; but they effectually dethrone Him from the position that He has always held in human thought and affection, as "the eternal King in the Kingdom of Truth." He is no longer "the stainless type of human perfection," but one who, however pre-eminent among us, must, as a German writer has said, "pay his tribute, as well as we, to human depravity and human weakness."

Such a view, that some would thrust upon us so lightly, would be a bitter loss to all humanity. And what should you and I do without Him who has been to us the very truth of God! But we are not called upon seriously to consider so destructive a criticism, because it is itself so untrue to the only historic picture that we have of Jesus. It is not exegesis, it is not criticism, it is wilful defacement and destruction at the dictatorial command of a dogmatic presupposition.

This is what the little circle of men who knew Jesus best, have to say of Him in the matter, in those earliest days before creeds or doctrines had come under debate.

Peter said, "He did no sin," I Peter, 2 : 22.

John said, "In him is no sin," I John, 3 : 5.

Paul said, " He knew no sin," I Cor. 5 : 21.

The man who wrote the letter to the Hebrews said, " He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin."

And, as for Jesus Himself, he asked indignantly, " Which of you convicteth me of sin? " (John 8: 46), saying, " I do always the things that are pleasing to God " (John 8 : 29).

Those verses may serve as our text, presenting as they do the universal understanding and belief of the early church, and of the church of all time.

We turn now to see how, in fact, this sinlessness of Jesus Christ appears. What is the character from which the vast structure of historic Christianity has arisen, like the lily from the bulb? What secret of transcendent power and beauty was in it, to make it the source of the world's redemption from untruth and deceit, from sin and shame?

We do not want to rest upon mere affirmations of His sinlessness; we want to see and feel wherein is the necessity for such an affirmation. Consider, as the chief ground of our faith, the indirect testimony of Jesus' own consciousness, in the absence of a sense of guilt, and of any reaction or indirect reflection of sin upon His own spirit.

A man's consciousness must in the long run inevitably betray his inward moral condition, however he might be unwilling to confess it. Let us

measure Jesus in this respect by standards that we comprehend,—i.e., by other good men. Not common men, of course, but by men uncommon, leaders in the kingdom of the spirit, who are the nearest to the equals of Jesus in moral elevation. They represent what God's grace can do for human nature at its choicest. Miracles of grace, some of them were called; they represent humanity with all its latent divinity called into expression, with the divine spirit overshadowing them. Let us put their consciousness by the side of the consciousness of Jesus, and see if there be any essential difference. Difference in degree of purity of life, we know there was; but look to see if there is any deeper difference, so radical and characteristic as to leave Him in a majestic solitariness.

It is with strange unanimity that the spiritual leaders of mankind confess, without reserve, inroads of evil upon their soul—their ever-attending consciousness of sin. Not necessarily like David, bitterly remorseful for heavy crimes against both God and man, but like the pure and lofty Isaiah, who at the very sight of the King cried out, "I am undone! for I am a man of unclean lips." A true man comes into near sight of the ineffable holiness of God to feel—what? The satisfying purity of his own spirit? Never this! But to see in himself, in that searching light of truth and love, the irre-

trievable stains that are his shame. By God's mercy he may be cleansed, but clean with the eternal, unspotted cleanliness of God he cannot be. Always he will be the man once unworthy—once forgiven —forever the trophy of God's compassion, rescued from the grip of sin. And even though he comes to be partaker of the divine nature, will he not always be, above all, a son redeemed with a great price, with the gratitude and humility of that great deliverance upon his spirit?

In any case it is certain that this sense of need and ill-desert is an inevitable mark of the man of spiritual sense and feeling here on earth; and men instinctively realize that he in whom this sense is lacking, lacks the very most essential quality of a spiritual leader for his race. His self-confidence is his condemnation. There have been men who felt that they could face God with confident self-possession, because of their virtues; and just so far forth their fellows have shrunk away from them as abnormal—not more, but less than human, lacking in self-knowledge. Rousseau made no secret of his moral turpitude. But he, speaking of his rejecting with contempt God's gift of His Son, said: "My virtues are sufficient to expiate my crimes, and on these I will depend as my sole mediators before God." But the world has not seen in this the evidence of superior, but of inferior, moral

stature,—so proper to a true man is his sense of limitation and shortcoming, as he faces God.

And yet, so far as we can see from all the records, Jesus stood as uncondemned and confident before God as though He were God Himself; and none is repelled by His audacity, or counts it moral hardihood on His part.

There was a man, one hundred and fifty years ago, Fletcher of Madeley, a companion of the Wesleys, who, almost alone in modern times, gained from his fellows the reputation of "almost seraphic holiness." It has been said that never perhaps since the rise of Christianity has the mind which was in Christ been more faithfully copied than it was in the Vicar of Madeley. His sanctity of life was without perceptible spot or flaw. Indeed, one of the most notable critics of Christianity in our last generation has claimed that his character was more perfect than that of Jesus. We might well expect to find in him a close approach to the experience of Jesus in his unruffled consciousness of the divine approval—in a conscience void of offence. Yet never man heard Jesus calling Himself, as did Fletcher, "a weary perplexed sinner, in the dust of self-despair; a man utterly undone; wanting in love, excelling in pride." We do not even need to inquire how far this estimate of himself was justified—we only have to note its presence, so alien to any-

thing that can be detected in the consciousness of Jesus, or that can be wrenched by inference from his sayings.

Here is that shining light of a dark age, Thomas à Kempis, showing us what was in his soul, "What have I done, O Lord, that thou shouldst bestow any heavenly comfort upon me? I have always been prone to sin and slow to amendment. This is true and I cannot deny it. If I should say otherwise, thou wouldst stand against me and there would be none to defend me. I have sinned. O Lord, have mercy upon me, pardon me!" In what another world this man moved from Him who said that He did always the things that please God.

You all know how we might continue indefinitely this inquiry. But it is not necessary. Nowhere in the world's history do we come on one like Jesus, uncondemned of sin, even in His inmost soul. Not callous, nor conscienceless! for He belonged to the race that of all human races has had the profoundest consciousness of moral evil, and of the awful holiness of Jehovah. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Yet he was a man who never made confession of a fault, who never asked forgiveness for a sin, who never sought redeemer or mediator to lean upon; who never showed sign of contrition or penitence or shame; who never so much as classified Himself in these regards with men, His brothers;

but who thought and spoke and acted, through life and in death, as one as infinitely removed from the universal experience of His brethren in this respect as though He also shared the unapproachable glory of God's holiness.

And in all this He was as miraculous an exception to the uniformity of natural order, as a man would be with a higher structure than the vertebrate. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Here is one, living a truly human life, who not only says it, but who acts upon it, taking upon himself honors and prerogatives that go only with the spotlessness like God's—claiming to forgive sin, and to set Himself as the moral norm for human life. What moral obtuseness and what hopeless depth of pride that means, if He spoke as we should have spoken in such a claim.

If that unmistakable assumption of purity were not genuine, what indignation it should rouse in men, that such a man should claim to be a moral leader. Humility is better than vast pretensions, even in a spiritual giant. But has the world felt this indignant wrath with Jesus for His pride? No! it has only seen in it a sweet reasonableness. Because—and this leads us a step further—because, even after any hostile sifting of the records, He stands as one having the virtues of a sinless man. This is no colorless absence of sin, or absence of

its consciousness, but the presence of a more than human sweetness and beauty. It is a character that has not angered the world at Him for an enormous vanity, but that has held the world's affection by its loveliness. He has won the love of the vilest and the reverence of the purest.

It is not exaggerating, is it, to say that we see in Him as in a complete white light the virtues that, in those about us whom we admire, shine in the broken colors of the spectrum—the strength and gentleness, the dignity and meekness, the transparent simplicity, and the profound depths beyond human knowing? We love Him for His unsullied purity and His divine compassion for the impure and outcast; for His inflexible faithfulness to duty and His submission to His Father's will; for His stern hostility to wrong and oppression, and His pity for the distresses of the world; for His own quiet patience under malice and abuse, and for His superb courage in the face of threatening torture and death; for His self-forgetfulness, and more than all for the fervent, palpitating love that led Him all His life and made Him glad to lay it down at last for others.

And not for these things taken singly or unrelated, but for the more than human sweetness and beauty with which they were mixed up in Him, so that we feel no incongruity in regarding Him as

the very revelation of the Father: so that when we see in lives about us the choicest qualities that can grow in a human soul, we recognize without wonder that they have come from Him.

This is the matchless figure that we have left to us, even after we have done our best to eliminate the supernatural from the story of the founder of Christianity. Is it worth while seeking to eliminate it?

If we believe that in Him our Father was unfolding Himself to man, then His appearance and character, with all the history that He has made, become natural, reasonable, so to speak non-marvellous. The fact that it was supernatural in origin makes it natural and easy to believe and understand. It affords the only natural and orderly explanation. The sinless man stands out majestically alone from all the members of the human race; he breaks the uniform sway of the natural order, say what we will; he is the sublime exception to the collective experience of humanity. Why this inexplicable break, as of a new creation? Evolution has no more to say of it than of any other beginning—of matter, of life, of mind—all human theories are silent: and where human theories are helpless to explain, there we see the natural explanation in the appearance among us of the Holy One of God.

There are two inquiries in this connection that are of pressing interest, because the subject of cur-

rent discussion. Does this unique sinlessness of Jesus, so profoundly unlike the conditions that we sinners know, does this put Him further from us, removing Him from our sympathy? Would He have been nearer to us had He, too, been overcome of evil? The answer unmistakably is, No! We have companions and friends enough who are weak, who have been themselves defeated, and who cannot wholly bid us look up in time of moral danger. It is good to have, not only a Saviour, but a Friend, a Companion, who can perfectly hold our trust and lead us through any allurements of this earth. He is bound to us as a brother and sympathizer, not because He also proved unworthy under trial, but because He suffered, being tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. We have not stood that test; we cannot see how we, being still ourselves, should be able to stand it. But this does not remove Him from us, any more than it removes our Heavenly Father from us because His love is perfect, and not frail like ours. Only the perfect man can perfectly command our hearts.

And then, further, look intently far on into the future. Has this sinlessness of Jesus, the great Elder Brother of the race, any promise or prophecy of what shall be for us? Neither science nor philosophy has any word to help us here,—we rest altogether and alone upon faith in the revelation of

the New Testament. But in that revelation we have the picture of Jesus as the first-born among many brethren,—as the One who should lead many sons into glory.

Well we know by experience that no moral victory is won save through sore travail—our own or another's. And what may lie before us of long discipline, or of wondrous inconceivable energy in our spirits of the transforming love of God, we cannot guess. Surely vast changes and achievements lie in the unknown future, dwarfing our past into a hand's breadth; and unthinkable joys of victory and gladness are to be ours, if we are Christians, before His work in us is done.

But when the long day's work and discipline are over, when our Father's image in His children is complete, when our Lord sees in us of the travail of His soul and is satisfied, even then, when the disciple shall be "as his Lord," still He will be our Lord. Still will remain the infinite and eternal distinction between Redeemer and redeemed, that shall be our joy and praise forever. Though we are sons, yet shall we not repeat the experience of the Eternal Son; but even in that hour of final consummation the song of the whole family of creation shall still be, "Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing and the honor and the glory and the dominion, forever and ever."

XIV

A Life Purpose

"*One thing I do, . . . I press on.*"—PHIL. 3:13,14.

THE human will has infinite varieties, as we see it governing the lives of men about us; but there are two strongly contrasted types, at either end of the scale. One crumples up like paper at the first shock of serious resistance, the other stiffens itself like iron under assault, and holds on indomitably until the end, as if unable to let go.

Dr. Grenfell tells of a little fore-and-aft fishing schooner, of less than a hundred tons, that sailed from Cadiz, Spain, for a mid-winter passage across the North Atlantic. Her crew were all Newfoundland fishermen, of the toughest, hardiest sailor stock in the world, and her captain was of the true Viking breed, fearing nothing that the sea could do. Three weeks out, however, one black night, they were struck by a waterspout and left in a moment a helpless wreck, with everything forward swept clean; mast and bowsprit and bulwarks, boats and

deck-houses, all were gone, and the deck itself was gaping open like a sieve. The winter gales were at their height, and the crew, constantly wet through, unable to heat a morsel of food or drink, were soon chilled to the bone and exhausted by exposure. Their only hope was in keeping the wreck afloat a few hours or days by pumping, till they could be taken off by some passing vessel.

Day after day passed, the captain using every conceivable argument to keep them at the pumps, though half dead with misery. Days grew into weeks, until two weeks had gone, and nature could stand no more; the men begged to stop the useless struggle, that they might all go down together. But the captain would not yield. Another day and another he held them to the fight, day and night, even though they fell down from sheer weakness at their places by the handles. At last they sighted a steamer. It passed them by. Then a second. It also failed to answer their signals. Still he would not yield, though at the most their united strength could keep the sinking craft afloat but a few hours more, not even through the coming night. Then a third vessel was sighted just as night was closing in, and they lit a huge flare upon the deck, setting fire to the vessel, as their last chance to attract attention.

She was a towering Hamburg liner. She bore

down upon them through the furious seas, and hailed them to know if they could hold on till morning. No! they were sinking even then! Then a different phase of the same indomitable will declared itself. The life-saving crew on the steamer were soon in their places, and the steel life-boat was lowered; but before it could touch the water, a heavy sea caught it and crushed it like an egg-shell against the steamer's side. Manœuvring into position again, a wooden life-boat was this time lowered, with her crew in it; but before they could clear the vessel's side this, too, was smashed to kindling-wood and the men barely rescued. Was that the end?

Back again the huge steamer swung into position. Again the men, undaunted, took their places, this time in a light, collapsible boat, that was dropped from the davits on the run. And in the end, every one of the sinking crew was rescued, only a few moments before their schooner sank. And the iron will, that would not yield so long as life held, had saved against hopeless odds the whole ship's company.

I dwell so long upon this commonplace incident of the sea, because it fairly presents the type of resolution I wish to urge upon you. To that rugged sea-captain, brought up from earliest boyhood to fight an unending fight against the forces of the

cruel sea, amid fog and ice and bitter gales and endless hardships and privations, the determination not to yield to danger so long as life held had become like an instinct of the soul. He must hold on, even when odds seemed hopeless. He could not be daunted nor shaken in his purpose. You may see the same characteristic in almost all trained life-savers, as with veteran firemen, who seem incapable of weighing danger in the face of that irresistible bent and determination of the will to rescue the men and women hemmed in by the flames. Their whole being is gathered up and concentrated in a purpose and ambition that becomes fundamental, instinctive, so that it can neither be insidiously weakened nor suddenly overthrown. All the other natural cravings of their life are so subordinated to it that, without reasoning or reflection on their part, it towers over them supreme.

Many of us will soon be going out into the world to meet we know not what of the wrench and strain of character that come with strenuous years. Only one thing can save us from comparative failure and disappointment—that we should have as the deep, underlying motive of life, its over-ruling, all-comprehending determination, the assertion of the will, "One thing I do; I press on."

Like the sailor's resistance to the destroying sea, a resistance instinctive, unconscious, unquenchable,

so must be our declaration of resistance to all the weakening, disintegrating, corrupting influences of life. We know, every one of us, by experience of the past, that our resolution will be assailed, as in a mortal combat; the only thing we do not know is the precise angle from which the coming assaults will be delivered. That, we cannot foresee. The mere lapse of years, the growing cares of life, involve wholly unsuspected changes in the enemy.

One, for instance, who has never known anything but careless health, cannot dream of the slow, sullen siege of the spirit's citadel that comes with the temptation and bewilderment of ever-hampering weakness. He who has manfully borne the pressure of irritating poverty has no sympathetic insight into the dogged, iron self-restraint that will be needed for him to meet unseduced the perilous luxury of wealth. Some of us whose Christian faith is yet simple and unafraid may have to walk the way so many have trodden, where one must keep faith with God, even in anxious distress of doubt. We do not know, even the oldest of us, what future days may whisper to us of treason to our courage. The coward lurks in most of us, not far from the brave man. Sometimes he does not declare himself until the day is almost done. The temptation to let go, to turn back, to drop out of the race, will not cease until the goal is actually

reached. Oh! for a purpose of steel, tested and tempered through long years, that cries out, whether in strength or weakness, in light or in the dark, "I press on."

We shall almost inevitably be brought to a stand, at times; we shall be baffled, and discouraged, and hard beset. Oh, for a life purpose that will be like rock under our feet when we seem to be sinking in the quicksands! How many college-trained men, do you suppose there are, this very month, who are letting go of their ideals, because the call of big business, or of political pull, or municipal corruption, is proving stronger than their will, and paralyzing their nobler selves? The enemies were too many for them—they have given up the fight. They are no more of those who press on.

We need not only to have such an overmastering determination as this, but we need to know that we have it, to admit it to ourselves and others, to affirm it and proudly rest upon it. It is of no use to hold it in a tentative way, half furtively, unconfessed, as though we were secretly ashamed of what is best in us. We need to magnify and honor it in every possible way, so that it may stand compelling in the forefront of our consciousness. We may even need to make a fight for it, as for something of which we will not consent to be robbed under any circumstances conceivable. Out of any entangle-

ment, or defeat, or wreck of things, we must still arise unconquered, saying, "I press on."

Sir Robertson Nicoll tells of a poor girl, rescued from the wolves of Liverpool, dying at seventeen, pitifully beset by sad memories and fears. In her last moments, half conscious, fully conscious only of her desperate determination, she rose up in bed and lifting one arm as if to call God to witness, exclaimed, "I will fight for my soul, through hosts and hosts and hosts." With such a mortal earnestness and urgency must we cling to this ambition, if it is to go with us through all the deadly onsets of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

But let us look more closely at what it is and what it involves. We feel without argument that it means the gathering up of what is best in us, to go onward when the whole world drags at our feet, to keep up a soldier's determination when men all about us are out for plunder. But just what is this supreme, life-long committal of the will?

Paul leaves us in no doubt. He does not do what so many teachers do in our day, indulge in vague generalities or high-sounding ethical sentiments. "One thing I do," he said, "I press on toward the goal." There was an end before him, clear, magnificent, compelling. What was it? It was to answer to God's high calling. It was to achieve what Jesus Christ had made possible for him—to lay hold

on that for which he had been laid hold of by his Lord. He approved that as the best thing in life. He longed for it; he chose it with all his heart; he would press on toward it forever. The clear battle-call that had come to him through Christ Jesus was the call to which every fibre of his being answered.

Does this seem to any of you to be narrowing unduly the resolution to press on, which every one of us should share? Does it seem to narrow to a distinctly religious and sharply Christian complexion a purpose which should be so broad and inclusive that all honorable men could share in it? It does so narrow it, but for a good reason. It is to secure power and intensity!

If you take a magnifying-glass and hold it in the sun, you can gather up the sun's rays into a broad patch of light, of a greater intensity than the ordinary sunshine. This is what any of the great truths regarding God and the soul will do for the moral life, if brought to bear upon the spirit. They will inspire and lighten it. Any approach to God's good tidings will accomplish this illumination for the human soul. But if you hold that magnifying-glass away, at the proper angle, in just one position, you focus the sunlight in a burning point, of a heat and brilliancy otherwise unattainable. And just so, as an actual matter of experience, the intensest

energy of a divine warmth and power for the human will is found at the point where the light of God's truth is focused in the appeal of Jesus Christ to men. One may argue about it as he chooses, but the fact is incontestable. It is in a personal association with Jesus Christ that this high determination of the human will burns at its hottest. The will to press on toward God's best is immeasurably re-enforced by this wonderful relationship between a man and Him who came to be man's Saviour. If you honestly want power and intensity for such a life-long choice as this, you will seek for it, where numberless tempted men have found it, in this personal discipleship. It is not theory, or doctrine, or theology, that will carry you there, but the hard logic of fact—the fact that there, and there only, does your weak will find its supreme and sufficient inspiration.

You remember that gallant fighter, Rear-Admiral Philip—Captain "Jack" Philip of the "Texas." In his New Testament was pasted a slip with these words: "Put any burden upon me, only sustain me. Send me anywhere, only go with me. Sever any tie but this tie which binds me to thy service and thy heart." "Go with me!" Even the great sacrifices, the costly decisions, a man can quietly make in the strength of that personal fellowship. The goal of achieving God's thought for your life be-

comes possible as that thought is interpreted and commended to you day by day through the Master, and as His hold upon you lifts you up.

It is very easy to use brave words about life-long choices and an indomitable will. It is very easy to be confident in the pulpit, and to offer smooth prophecies to those who cannot answer back. One would be afraid and ashamed to make such a show of confidence, were it not for certain peculiar qualities about this particular determination, to press on toward the goal. Let us inquire what there is about this particular promise and engagement of the soul that roots it in a life, as the lighthouse shaft is rooted in the living rock; that makes it utterly different from many another life ambition, such as to become a great artist, to attain a fortune, or to achieve a commanding place in the councils of the nation.

"One thing I do; I press on toward the goal." This affirmation springs from the divine will, it is nourished by the divine love, and it issues in the divine glory. To make it and to hold it, is to have been lifted up by the mercy of God! It is not at all a dramatic or spectacular resolve, to be advertised to the world, like the purpose to fly across the Alps or the English Channel. It is not the glorious manifesto of a hero, or a conqueror, or a saint. It is the determination of an ordinary tempted, failing

man, like ourselves, to push on in spite of fears, to weather the storm, to make the harbor. Yet through and through it is bound up with that which is divinely glorious and triumphantly overcoming.

First of all, though it is so commonplace, so suited to the common man and so well within his power, its source is in the deep eternal springs of the divine will. We are in the merciful grasp of our Father in Heaven if we have this purpose. We may never have been so conscious of our weakness or our danger; but if this thought is in our heart, to press on toward that goal, God is dealing with us. Just as with Paul originally, that ambition grows up out of the visiting grace of the Almighty. It is He that worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. To set for ourselves that goal is to have met with the redeeming power of Him who has made us for Himself. It may not seem so very great or so very gracious, here at its humble beginnings, when the struggle is all about us and the entanglements and redoubts lie all before us. But looked back upon across the life-time of years, from the clear, calm morning of victory and joy, shall we not see how the power and guidance of God were in it, and how it was a purpose all divine?

Again, it is sustained and nourished by the divine love. It could hardly last out a year or a month

were it not confirmed and renewed by God's gentleness and forgiveness. It is a wonderful ambition this, which only lives by virtue of God's love. Were not His patience and long-suffering inexhaustible, how long do you think our resolution would stand the strain of failure, indefinitely repeated? He will gather up our energies anew, though we should stumble and fall prostrate again and again and again.

This only seems strange to us because we are so unforgiving, so unlike God. We need to be reminded repeatedly that even those servants of God who are successfully working for lost men and women, are of an extraordinary, and to us most unnatural, patience and hopefulness for those they seek to save. They remind us how God wins with us, and how He carries our faltering will, on and on, through years and years, to a steadfast and ultimately conclusive choice. But it is divine love that wins the battle, and not our splendid fidelity.

Here, for instance, we read of a crook and horse-thief, who wandered into the Water Street Mission and professed to be converted. Weeks after he had come out as a convert at the mission and had been wholly trusted by the workers, he again stole a horse and was locked up in Westchester Jail. They would be pretty angry and disgusted at the mission,

would they not! And yet the day that man's sentence expired, the jailer handed him a new suit of clothes from John Wyburn, the superintendent of the mission, and a note saying "God bless you; when you get back to the city look us up." And the broken-spirited man looked them up, and to-day stands faithful.

Here is the man McBride who for years has held a Sunday morning service in Harrison Street Jail, Chicago, in spite of unimaginable discouragements. One morning there was a sulky young fellow in one of the cells, to whom McBride, with a cordial smile, handed a hymn-book. The man spit upon him, like a snarling beast. He went back to him again, presently, and again the man spit at him through the bars. The third time the man simply turned his back. But the next morning the jailer telephoned McBride that the young man was all broken up and was crying for the preacher. McBride went to him, and together they knelt down among the crowd of policemen and lawyers and bondsmen, while he sobbed out his apology and his confession. He confessed that morning in court to a grave forgery committed in another State, and went back there willingly to a long prison sentence. But there came back presently the word that he was the leader of a prison Bible-class, and later McBride received the word of his triumphant death,

together with a message from him of gratitude and love and hope.

That helps us to imagine God. That is the way in which our Father wins with us, leading us on, when our unaided purpose would have broken down. This resolution of ours is rooted in His love—it draws its life from His continual forgiveness. The whole energy and power of the eternal gospel are behind our poor profession. And so the poorest of us may go forward hopefully.

And last of all, it issues in the divine glory. It is commonplace enough now, with the humiliation of our weakness through and through it. Our prayer now is,

"Keep me from turning back!
My hand is on the plough, my faltering hand;
But all in front of me is unfilled land,
The wilderness and solitary place,
The lonely desert and its interspace.
What harvest have I? But this paltry grain,
These dwindling husks, a handful of dry corn,
These poor lean stalks. My courage is outworn,
Keep me from turning back.
The handles of my plough with tears are wet,
The shares with rust are spoiled—and yet—and yet—
My God! My God! Keep me from turning back."*

He keeps us from turning back! We look at our Helper in Jesus Christ, and we know that He will

* From the "British Weekly."

keep us. He bids us even now rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We cannot see it across the impenetrable future, any more than Columbus could see across the misty ocean as he pressed forward. But we press on! God sees it for us, and as He calls us we walk by faith toward the glory that shall be.

THE END

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